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SOME LITERARY LANDMARKS

FOR

PILGRIMS ON WHEELS

Percy Bysshe Shelley

SOME
LITERARY LANDMARKS
for
PILGRIMS ON WHEELS

F. W. BOCKETT

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J. A. SYMINGTON

London

J. M. DENT & CO.

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT CO.

1901

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PREFACE

GENTLE reader, for you only these pages are written. To the boisterous or violent, who seek relief from the tempestuous scramble for wealth in tempestuous forms of fiction or news, they will be a disappointment indeed. But to you, whose dearest treasures are your well-thumbed books, whose most exciting feats of finance are carried out in the dusty atmosphere of booksellers' back-parlours, whose vaultings into the regions of "sport" end in a quiet amble along the roads of this dear land, to you these pages may arouse

some pleasant memories of beloved books read in the days that are no more, and may prompt you to take them again to your hearts. To you pilgrims who have discarded staff and sandals for the more comfortable and expeditious rubber-tyred wheels, there may be in this little book some hints that may lead you into delightful country lanes and across breezy commons whose beauties you have not yet discovered. May your pilgrimages in these byways be as great a source of pleasure to you as they have been to the writer.

To the many good-natured and courteous sons and daughters of the soil who have helped me to discover the objects of my search, to the scorchers and motorists who have left me thus far with a whole skin, to the patient and perspiring old friend who held me up for so many weary hours ere I

could sit in the saddle, and without whose strong arm and kindly heart I should never have become a pilgrim on wheels, and also to Messrs. Macmillan and Co. for permission to reprint the first three papers from their monthly magazine, I tender my sincere thanks. *F. W. B.*

June, 1901.

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SOME LITERARY LANDMARKS *for* PILGRIMS ON WHEELS

I

SANDFORD AND MERTON

CYCLING has found its legitimate place at last; it is as the Gentle Art that it will be with us to the end. Too long has angling usurped the title for which it has no justifiable claim, except when the revolting gentle is used as a bait, and then only in an objective and not a subjective sense. It has always been a matter of astonishment to thoughtful persons why the bloodthirsty art of killing fishes by means of hook and line should ever have been called gentle. The fact is that the art of angling has been able to flourish for so long under false colours simply because Izaak Walton wrote

about it in so inimitable a manner. It is not a gentle art, but a cold-blooded, savage, and cruel one. As to its moral effect upon those who practise it, one half-hour spent in listening to the fairy tales told at any anglers' club would be sufficient to convince the most sceptical that anti-angling societies are as necessary as anti-drink, anti-meat, or any other of the associations that exercise such beneficent negative influences. Izaak Walton has indeed much to answer for; but probably all his iniquities will be overlooked because he has preserved for mankind "The Milkmaid's Song," which will in future become the special property of the only truly Gentle Art—that of cycling. What could be more appropriate than, as lover and lass skim along the country lanes, for the swain to sing—

> Come, live with me and be my love,
> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That valleys, groves, or hills, or field,
> Or woods and steepy mountains yield?

It will be understood, of course, that the mountains must not be too "steepy" in character, but just sufficiently sloping to relieve the monotony of the plains below.

And here probably the patience of the policeman, the elderly nervous lady, the nurse-maid, the cabman, the 'busman, and the unfortunate minority who cannot or will not enjoy the pleasures of pedalling will be exhausted. "The gentle art indeed! How about the Scorcher who slaughters women and children to make a Cockney's bank-holiday?" My dear friends, I can only say that the Scorcher is a Scorcher and not a cyclist, and that before long he will be as extinct as the old bone-shaker. The times have changed. When strong athletic young men first found themselves springing along the ground over pneumatic tyres the temptation to revel in this newly-discovered power (I had almost written *sense*) was too great to be withstood. To be held down to a snail's progress of four miles an hour by steady toe-and-heel tramping, and then suddenly to be gifted with the power of flying through the air at the rate of fourteen miles an hour with no more exertion than that entailed in walking four—this was intoxication that at one time promised to send our youth crazy. But we have altered all that now; the novelty has worn off, and even vigorous youth is

inclined to use the new power with discretion. The Scorcher is seen at rare intervals, but neither he, nor the poor things who grind round the racing-tracks, represent the real cycling world of to-day. That world consists of the great army of men and women who have transformed cycling into the Gentle Art that has brought nature and man together in a way that not even the arts of poetry and painting have hitherto succeeded in doing. To women especially do we owe this change. The woman who first rode a bicycle little realised what she was doing for her sex and for the race. By the way, what a splendid subject for the silly season! Who was the first woman to ride a bicycle? Think how the maidens and their male champions would deluge the columns of the lucky newspaper with long letters setting forth their claims—miles of exciting manuscript, free, gratis, and for nothing. Has any poet ever written stanzas to the eyebrows of the first cycle-maiden? Probably not, because even a poet is capable of foreseeing how awkward it would be if it should be discovered that the first lady to ride on a bicycle was a respectable, middle-aged, married woman.

Yes, women and elderly men have done much to raise cycling to the Gentle Art. The cycle is no longer a machine for covering the longest distance in the shortest space of time. It is a companion to the solitary, a friend that is always exhilarating and never selfish, an aid to reflection; it gives inspiration to the poet, health and strength to the plain man, vigour to the man of science, and breadth to the philosopher. Imagination fails one in the attempt to conceive what Carlyle might have been had he practised vaulting into the saddle over a pair of sound pneumatics. We should have had no querulous domestic ravings, no dyspeptic beatings of the air, the starry heavens would not have been "a sad sight" had the prophet of Chelsea (Mr. Morley has told us why we must not call him the sage) seen them as he pedalled along the Ripley Road. The adjuncts of cycling would have taken some of the objectionable philosophic starch out of Thomas. It is all very well for a man who has never tackled the petty details of life to give himself airs over domestic irritations; but when he has once had to repair a tyre on the roadside, and to clean up a machine after a muddy ride, he

begins to feel somewhat tolerant towards the shortcomings of domestic servants, and even of wives. Some day I intend to write a lengthy dissertation on the moral influence of cycling, but if I attempt it now I shall never reach Sandford and Merton.

Every one who is a true and honest follower of the Gentle Art always sets out upon a journey, be it long or short, with some particular object in view—to see whether that grand patch of heather on the other side of the common is yet in bloom, to find out whether the sloes are ripe for the preparation of that famous cordial the name of which must not be mentioned here, to see how the sunset looks through the pines in the distant forest, or to pay a reverent visit to some historic shrine. What a help a cycle is to the enjoyment of these simple pleasures! There is no rush to a railway station, no preliminary wading through time-tables, not even a horse to be harnessed—no anxiety of any kind. A little oil in the bearings, perhaps a few strokes of the inflator or the tightening of a nut, stride over the saddle, and off you go!

No ride can compete with one to some

place of historic or other interest which you are to see for the first time. All along the road the imagination is keenly at work; as you pedal on you draw mental pictures of the spot as you conceive it to be, and you wonder how nearly your mental picture is to correctness. As you pass the last finger-post you are filled with a keen excitement. Along this very road the great So-and-so must often have walked, by the girth of that oak tree he might often have lingered under the shade of its wide-spreading boughs. Did the honeysuckle climb over that hedge in his days as it does now? Perhaps that identical patch of rose-bay willow gladdened his eyes with its lovely colouring every summer as it does mine to-day. The man or woman who does not derive some pleasure from such thoughts has missed one of the greatest charms of a run on the road.

What I call my Sandford and Merton run came about in this way. You must know that when you write a certain class of leading article, it is essential to display a vast knowledge of the subject you are dealing with; you make allusions and references to a great variety of persons, places and things, till your readers

marvel as Goldsmith's rustics marvelled at the village schoolmaster—

That one small head could carry all he knew.

In one of these leading articles on the subject of education the writer had suddenly plumped down a dark and mysterious allusion to the experiments of the author of *Sandford and Merton*, which he hinted had led to disastrous results. Is there any boy now in existence who has read *Sandford and Merton?* When we were boys it used to be our second gift; first the Bible, then *The History of Sandford and Merton.* It is an awful thing to reflect upon now, that some of us had a hazy notion that the two books were by the same writer. The Bible told us not to do the wicked things that we were so often inclined to do, and so did Mr. Barlow, the respected teacher of Harry and Tommy. Probably the present generation of youth only know the book by name, and that knowledge has been gathered through Mr. Burnand's burlesque version. But, notwithstanding all the jeers and jibes that have been levelled at it, and notwithstanding the blunder of making Harry Sandford such a

terrible little prig, the book contains more sound advice and common-sense, put in a simple style intelligible to children, than any work that has been written since. It is a remarkable fact that this book, which was at one time read by almost every English child, was the only channel through which the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau flowed into the minds of the English public, and that without the dear good souls knowing anything about it.

Thomas Day, author of this once famous history, did a very great deal more than write the book with which his name is always connected. He was an exceedingly interesting man, in many ways far in advance of his contemporaries, and when I read this allusion to his disastrous experiments I wrote off post-haste to my friend the Librarian, asking him what these disastrous experiments were like, because I knew not of them. The Librarian has read almost all the good books that ever were written, and, unlike most omnivorous readers, he has retained a marvellous portion of their contents. He is a great admirer of Thomas Day, and was wroth with the newspaper man for writing of the author of *Sandford*

and Merton in so scoffing a spirit. He concluded his reply to my question by asking me to send him a sketch of Day's grave, which he had never had an opportunity of seeing. "You are only about twenty-eight miles from the spot," said he, "and could ride over to Wargrave on your bicycle quite easily." How it enhances one's affection for the Gentle Art when from time to time we find it the means of giving pleasure not only to ourselves but also to a dear friend!

I soon discovered Wargrave on the one-inch ordnance map, about a mile and a half north of Twyford, which, as every one knows, is within eight miles of Maidenhead. By the way, when will the public learn to take advantage of the work of the Ordnance Survey? Here are these admirably engraved maps, on the scale of one inch to a mile, to be had at the ridiculous price of one shilling each; and nobody seems to buy them, or even to know of their existence, excepting the surveyors and the lawyers. Each of these shilling maps covers an area of about two hundred and sixteen square miles, and they are a compact compendium of information for the cyclist. Every

road and by-road, and many of the field-paths, are all shown with a clearness that is a revelation to those who examine them for the first time. Not only are the roads easy to trace, but you can tell at a glance whether they are first, second, or third-rate metalled roads, or whether they are unmetalled, whether they are hilly or flat, whether they pass through woodland, common, heath, or fields. County and parish boundaries, churches, chapels, historic buildings, post-offices, letter-boxes, and, in sparsely-populated districts, roadside inns are all distinctly shown by ingenious methods of draughtsmanship. And now that all this valuable information has been compiled at an enormous expense, it is not taken advantage of as it should be, simply because our foolish old Government does not know how to sell it and popularise it. Four of these ordnance maps, with your place of domicile in the centre, will give you an endless number of excursions which without such aid you might never discover. At the cost of a few pence and a little skill you can mount them on linen and carry them folded up in the pocket of your Norfolk jacket.

Before starting on my run I carefully traced out the best route, writing down on a piece of card, as is my custom, the names of the principal villages and the miles between them. Every ambler should make a point of doing this, as it prevents any unnecessary hurry, enabling you to see at a glance how many miles you have to travel. Starting from a village in Surrey I made my way across a breezy heather-covered common towards the little village of Chobham. It was a delightful August morning, the sun's heat being tempered by fleecy clouds and a cooling breeze. The road across the common, though rather loose at ordinary times, was in excellent condition owing to the rain that had fallen during the night. Blue and brown butterflies were continually fluttering across the road and the larks were vying with one another to fill the upper air with song. One never seems to lose the sense of glorious freedom and almost wild excitement that comes over one during the first few miles of a morning ride; each morning the old familiar thrill is experienced again, as if for the first time.

Beyond the bridge with the white handrails,

where half-a-dozen village boys are bathing in the rivulet, their little brown bodies glistening in the sunshine as the cool water streams off them, the common soon disappears, and thick

The Approach to Chobham

high hedgerows guard the fields on either side. Here the robins and water-wagtails show all their native impertinence and stand quite fearlessly as the bicycle passes them. Have they found out by experience that the wheelman

never interferes with them? That birds do acquire such knowledge there can be no doubt. I have noticed for many years that the sparrows in Trafalgar Square will allow a grown-up person to approach them quite closely, and show no sign of fear; but they will not allow a boy to come within twenty yards of them.

A few minutes' ride along the winding lane brought me into the village street of Chobham, with the usual number of public-houses and its somewhat picturesque church. Chobham is in the enviable position of being five miles from a railway station, and consequently remains a quiet, uneventful, old-fashioned place, several of its houses being now three hundred years old. Blush, ye jerry-builders of the neighbouring town, who are setting up death-traps as fast as you can; in twenty years' time your work will be in ruins, while these old veterans will be as firm and sound as they have ever been.

Turning out of the village street I entered the pleasant winding lane that leads towards Bagshot, a lane with fine old trees on either side, the trunks covered with pretty parasitic growths. The road was rough, but not at all

bad riding. In Surrey, even on the smallest by-roads, one can generally find a smooth track sufficiently wide for a bicycle, the Haslemere district of course excepted. May I never be led into discoursing on the road between Liphook and Haslemere! The great main roads, well metalled and kept in excellent condition as they generally are, offer seductive temptations to the cyclist; but, after all, there is no riding so pleasant as a quiet amble along a winding lane with trees meeting overhead. One never knows what surprise nature has in store at the next turn; and one gets into close touch with the birds, squirrels, rabbits and wildflowers in these peaceful by-ways, where no Scorcher is ever seen and where the strident voice of the stout middle-aged lady in knickerbockers is never heard. It is true, however, that sometimes at a turn of the winding lane mankind has a surprise in store for us of a rather unpleasant character. Sometimes it is in the shape of a bullet-headed boy driving a dozen cows or a flock of sheep, who will not make the slightest attempt to keep his charges on one side of the road; sometimes it is a cart loaded with hay or straw which reaches from

one side of the road to the other. I once ducked and went underneath the overhanging load of one of these huge ships of the road, but wild horses shall not induce me to repeat the experiment. Country carters, and even flymen, are as a rule courteous, and on narrow roads will draw into the near side in order not to drive the poor wheelman into the ditch.

Just past the Gordon Boys' Home I dismounted at the forked roads, as I always do at this spot, to look backward across the lovely vale in the direction of Guildford. When the gentle cyclist comes across a view such as this —and he should always be on the look-out for such—he should dismount, fill up his pipe, sit on the top of a five-barred gate, or lie prone upon the ground, as he may well do here among the heather, and digest the prospect. Never arrange a journey without allowing sufficient time for meditation and contemplation. If you want to beat records do it on the racing-track, which the sporting fraternity has provided for such pastimes. When you have turned off into the road leading direct to Bagshot you have a pleasant series of gentle hills to glide over of the attractive switchback type.

Bagshot is a nice clean little town, which it is always a pleasure to ride into. You can scent the military there, and the old lady who gave me some tea on my return in the afternoon told me, with much pride in tone and manner, that the Duke of Connaught passed her door every morning. She even went to the trouble of stepping out into the road and swinging her old arms to and fro, to show me the exact portion of the road along which His Royal Highness passed. Such loyalty was touching in one who had to make both ends meet by providing teas at a shilling a head, with two new-laid eggs thrown in. Why do these old ladies in country places always boil eggs hard? When I was young and inexperienced I ventured to instruct one of these dames as to how she might always ensure having soft-boiled eggs, but I regret to say that my advice was not received in the spirit in which it was offered. It is the common fate of those who endeavour to propagate important truths.

From Bagshot it was a glorious run on a good road through Swinley Forest to Bracknell. I noticed scores of bicyclists on the main road running through Bagshot, but in the midst of

this delightful forest scenery I was the only one. It was indeed a place of solitude. As I sat down on the root of a giant oak, to take in a particularly attractive scene of silver birch, oak, elm, and pine, all standing knee-deep, as it were, in green and golden bracken and purple heather of varying shades, there came rattling along a most imposing equipage. Two thoroughbred horses of exceptional stature pranced in their glittering harness; a portly coachman and the most dignified and supercilious footman I had ever seen were perched high up on the box-seat of a sumptuous swinging carriage. And all this was to carry along a poor, wizen-faced old woman who looked very unhealthy and very unhappy! Following at some distance behind there came a strange group. A man with a rope about his loins attaching him to the shafts of a cart; a woman at his side also harnessed by rope to the cart; on the other side, but well in front, tied to the end of a long rope, was a barefooted little boy, certainly not more than six years old, doing his share of tugging at the cart, which was loaded with wood, the inevitable baby being perched high up on the top. They came to a stand-

still as they reached the brow of the hill, the man and woman gasping for breath and wiping the sweat from their faces with their begrimed hands. The little boy grinned through his dirt and danced with delight at the end of his rope. The man and woman soon laughed too, the man doing a little double-shuffle in the shafts, as if to convince all interested that he had some life left in him yet, and the yellow-haired dirty baby up aloft crowed and clapped his hands in the joy of his little life. "Come along, Jinnie; a little more pull, and we'll 'ave 'arf-a-pint at the Cricketers!" Off they went, truly a happy family—at that moment, at any rate.

I sprang into the saddle, and commenced ruminating over the social contrasts with which we are surrounded, and the many schemes for making every one happy — those political Morrison's Patent Pills, as Carlyle called them —but a stiffish incline along a lovely glade distracted my attention, and in a very short time I had left the forest behind and was pedalling cheerfully through Bracknell village. The roads here are somewhat confusing, and I was forced to make inquiries. An old white-

haired man was passing through the street, carrying a basket of cucumbers, and muttering to himself, "'Ere they are, fine cucumbers, as long as yer arm!" Perhaps he was afraid to repeat such a fib in too loud a tone. In answer to my inquiries he gabbled on for some time, describing various roads leading to Twyford, and rejecting them all in turn on the ground of some fault in them. Some went too far round, some were too rough, some too hilly, others had all these defects. I managed to gather, however, which was the road to Binfield, and on I went.

From Binfield to Twyford the road was very rough; it was difficult to find a solid channel anywhere, and I ploughed through the sand and shingle with as much resolution as I could command. I relieved the monotony of these heavy roads by pausing occasionally to watch the labourers at work in the fields, or to examine some of the strange-looking machines that are rapidly becoming the common features of the country-side. "Some day it'll all be done by machines," said a labourer gloomily, as he munched his bread and cheese; "and then we shall all have to go into the workus!"

Over a stony railway bridge into Twyford I steered, not in a violent race-track style, but with the calm dignity becoming a middle-aged gentleman entering a strange town on a bicycle. Having now travelled nearly thirty miles and being close to my destination, I thought I might reasonably refresh; so hieing me to a humble hostelry I did so with bread and cheese and ale. Anything approaching to heavy eating or drinking during a day's ride is a woful mistake; you cannot digest food properly and pedal a machine at the same time. As to drink, if you imbibe at all freely of alcohol you cannot ride; and the inverse of this being equally true is a strong reason for encouraging young men to take to cycling. If you are thirsty—and most novices suffer terribly

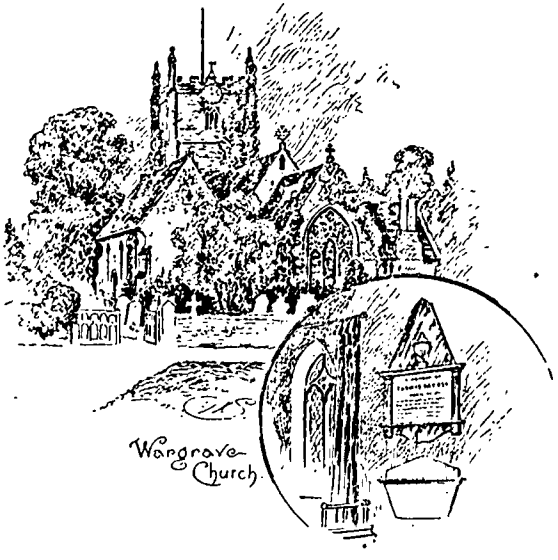
from thirst—do not drink anything, but simply rinse out your mouth with water, which will alleviate the thirst far more effectually than quarts of liquid poured into the stomach. Half the thirstiness is caused by riding with the mouth more or less wide open; on a dry day this means that your tongue, palate, and throat become coated with dust. All that is necessary is to wash this dust away, and try to ride with your mouth shut.

An easy ride of about a mile and a half along a good road brought me to Wargrave. It is only travellers who by long journeying have won the right to membership of the Travellers' Club who are allowed to indulge in superlatives; a mere idler along the roads like myself must be sparing of his adjectives; otherwise I should wax enthusiastic about Wargrave village street. I wonder whether you can find anywhere else so many pretty flower-decked houses, so many smart-looking inns; has any other village such a wonderful, well-to-do, easy-going air about it? Every house seems to be a quaint little palace of quiet enjoyment. Surely all the male inhabitants must wear brown velvet coats and soft felt hats, and all the women must be beautiful dames of the

Du Maurier type. But where were they all? Not a soul was to be seen! Evidently in this peaceful village the afternoon nap is an honoured custom. What shining brass knockers, what highly-polished windows, what pretty white casements, and flowers, flowers everywhere. This must be the place where all the minor poets live; which may explain many of the queer verses that have often caused me to wonder whether I was very dense or very silly. Who could live here without soaring above the commonplace, the common language, and the common sense?

As I reflected thus I strolled down a side street, and caught sight of the church and churchyard, just the sort of church you would expect to find in such a village. Two gables and a square red tower, half-covered with foliage, confront you as you walk across a field in which are some fine old trees that must often have gladdened the eyes of Thomas Day. I searched diligently in the churchyard for the good man's tomb, but not a glimpse of it could I find. There was the bell-ringer's grave, with a stone cross above it, erected by the vicar and parishioners. He deserved a monument, for he had

rung the bell for thirty years. What scenes of joy and sorrow the old man must have witnessed! But why the half-hearted praise of



the inscription, "Thou hast been faithful in a few things"? Did the reverend and the lay subscribers really mean to imply that the old fellow was unfaithful in many things?

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! A journey

of thirty miles and no tomb to be found! Perhaps Thomas Day was not buried here at all. I went into the church a disheartened traveller, and thought of Seneca's diatribe against those who are not content to stay at home. "He that cannot live happily anywhere will live happily nowhere. What is a man the better for travelling? As if his cares could not find him out wherever he goes. Frequent changing of places shows an instability of mind, and we must fix the body before we can fix the soul. We return neither the better nor the sounder; nay, and the very agitation hurts us [there were no pneumatic tyres in Seneca's day]. We learn to call towns and places by their names, and to tell stories of mountains and of rivers; but had not our time been better spent in the study of wisdom and of virtue?"—and so on. How Seneca would have chuckled to find a rambling cyclist in such a plight!

Suddenly I caught sight of the name of Thomas Day on a tablet fixed against the wall of the church. Here was the solution of the mystery; our old friend was buried inside the church, and, as I afterwards found out, his bones were lying beneath the very pew in which I

was seated. The tablet is a plain, commonplace affair, from which I copied the following inscription :—

In memory of Thomas Day, Esq., who died the 28th September, 1789, aged 41, after having promoted by the energy of his writings and encouraged by the uniformity of his example the unremitted exercise of every public and private virtue.

Beyond the rage of time or fortune's power,
Remain, cold stone, remain and mark the hour
When all the noblest gifts which Heaven e'er gave
Were centred in a dark untimely grave.
Oh, taught on Reason's boldest wings to rise
And catch each glimmering of the opening skies,
Oh, gentle bosom! Oh, unsullied mind!
Oh, friend to truth, to virtue and mankind,
Thy dear remains we trust to this sad shrine,
Secure to feel no second loss like thine.

So good a man deserved at least a better epitaph. For Thomas Day was really a good man, who deserved to live in later times, when many of his ideas bore fruit and cycling added a new pleasure to life. He found himself a young man of some fortune in a world of much wickedness and suffering. He did not drink hard and ride hard, like most of his contempor-

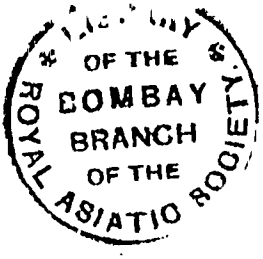
and wore a cricket-cap perched jauntily on his head; whereas every one knows that the sexton of a country graveyard should be old, very old indeed, with white hair somewhat unkempt, a face deeply seared by time and the almost daily witnessing of sorrow; he should have a melancholy air and crack grim jokes; above all, he should be unclean and have bits of clay scattered freely about his clothing. This man had none of the proper characteristics of his calling. I observed with particular regret that he was clean; he might indeed have passed for a respectable carpenter. Did he know of the grave of Thomas Day? "Yes, under the pew, under the stone on the wall; 'e was thrown orf 'is 'orse."

"Yes," I murmured sadly, thinking of Day's untimely end.

"Thrown orf 'is 'orse," repeated the sexton in a defiant tone. The man seemed to revel in the fact; probably it was the only one he knew of concerning poor Day. I asked him whether many people came to see the grave.

"You're about the sixth this year," he replied.

So the author of *The History of Sandford and Merton* is not quite forgotten.



II

SOLDIER, GRAMMARIAN, AND POLITICIAN

WE were sitting in a little room at the back of the village inn, the Schoolmaster and I. He did not tell me that he was a schoolmaster; but the expression of habitual worry on his face, the constant tend of the conversation towards the vagaries of the Education Department, grotesque examination-papers, the characteristics of the genus *boy*, and many other similar touches, convinced me that he was a pedagogue. Then, again, for four mortal weeks he had been sitting on the banks of the stream that flowed beneath the window, trying to hook innocent little fishes that had never done him any harm. This was just the sort of pastime that a man, whose soul had been embittered by the brutal stupidity and

Satanic impishness of a hundred boys, would fly to. He was manufacturing a mysterious paste of a variety of messy farinaceous substances, in which he now and then dropped a few drops of gin, much to the disgust of the natives who peeped in at us through the bar-window. With this toothsome mixture he expected to commit much slaughter on the following morning.

It was most annoying; the rain was pouring down steadily, to the Schoolmaster's great satisfaction, and he would persist in talking fish. I knew that nothing but some educational subject would lead him away from his awful hobby, so, in sheer desperation, I tackled him on the teaching of foreign languages. He took the bait and we were soon at it, to use the words of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, "Ding-dong, horse and foot, helter-skelter, right and left."

"Oh, yes," said he testily, "there's to be no application now; everything's to be made easy, and boys and girls are to be taught French without their knowing it. They're to pick it up, as children pick up their mother-tongue! Why, sir, they'd be seventy years of age before they could read half-a-dozen pages on such a

system. When I was a boy I had to work hard to acquire knowledge. My first French book was William Cobbett's French Grammar —do you know it?"

"Know it! I should think I did," I replied. "Shall I ever forget the villain's instructions for learning the genders! You were to rule sheets of paper down the centre and then go through the dictionary, copying out the feminines on one side of your line and the masculines on the other, and committing them to memory a page at a time. Do you know anything more likely to prevent a boy learning French?"

The Schoolmaster's worn face relaxed in a smile, but we soon both agreed that Cobbett was a fine old fellow, and had done much to set people thinking.

It was this conversation that made me determine to ride over to Farnham the next day, if the weather would but change. What better excuse could one find for a ride along the Hog's Back than an interview with the ghost of old Cobbett? And beyond Farnham there was Moor Park, with recollections of Dean Swift and Stella. The Schoolmaster approved my

plans, and, rather sheepishly, begged me to bring him a spray from Cobbett's grave. You see, in spite of years of suffering from the brutality of boys, the old fellow had still a soft place left in his heart.

The morning looked doubtful, to say the least of it; the London paper prophesied thunder-showers with bright intervals. I resolved to take my chance of having a fair share of the latter. When I once asked an old skipper how he liked sea-faring, he gave me this answer: "If ever you come across a man who has been on the seas for three years, and says he likes it, you may put him down as a liar." Just so, if ever you come across a cyclist who says that he rides in all weathers and enjoys it, don't you believe him. To enjoy cycling three things are necessary: a good machine, a good road, and fair weather. If you are on tour, a day spent in prowling about a country village or town is infinitely more enjoyable than driving on laboriously through pelting rain and slush; the rest does you a great deal of good and gives zest to the next day's ride. You are a poor specimen of humanity if you cannot discover some interesting characters in the

place and pick up scraps of information from them. I rejoice to find in my wanderings so many village libraries, and the number appears to be increasing. Many of them consist of simply a room with a table and a few chairs in it, and a shelf or two round the walls; the daily and illustrated papers lie on the table, and the shelves contain a few books. The cost of keeping up such an institution must be very small, but it is a civilising and refining influence that should bear excellent fruit. I admire quiet, unostentatious work of this kind. Your great man gives a large sum of money to build a big institution, which is opened with a loud flourish of trumpets, and immediate glory is showered upon the gracious founder, every one taking it for granted that the institution is going to accomplish great things because it cost a pile of money. The founders of these simple libraries received no glory and expected none; they have been content to try what can be done to raise the tone of the village labourer and mechanic. Such places form a quiet haven for a man when he has half-an-hour to spare, and they often give shelter and amusement to the belated cyclist, who, if he be a true follower of

the Gentle Art, slips a coin into the contribution-box, and perhaps, when he returns home, sends down a few books to add to the shelves.

My nearest way to Farnham would have been through the scattered hamlet of Send, on to the famous Ripley Road, but as that would have meant about five miles of rather rough riding, I decided to tack in the direction of New Woking, and get on to a road leading through shady lanes and across commons into Guildford from the Stoke side. As I got into the saddle I caught sight of the Schoolmaster sitting in his melancholy punt, where he had been casting his line on the waters since six o'clock that morning. He waved his hat in farewell, a most unusual display of high spirits in so undemonstrative a character. I concluded that his three hours' exertions must have resulted in a bite.

The roads were none the worse for yesterday's rain, and there was the advantage of having no dust to contend with. Between Woking and Guildford there are no hills worthy the name, only a series of gentle inclines that even elderly amblers can get over with ease. There is one nice little slope, running

down into the road that leads to Mayford, where the trees meet overhead like the arched roof of a cathedral aisle. I should not like my enemy, the Scorcher, to know it, but I have been guilty of *coasting* down this incline. In justice to myself, however, I wish to state that I have never been guilty of such an act when any man, woman, or other animal has been in sight.

On the ethics of coasting disputations might be carried on for years by discourses, letters, and pamphlets, just as St. Augustin and the early Fathers discussed Pelagianism and Arianism. The sensation is delightful, and it is a tempting form of rest for weary legs; but it is decidedly dangerous both for the rider and the pedestrians who may happen to get in his way. The cockney Harrys and country yokels who go in for coasting without a brake to their machines deserve all they get at the hands of the magistrates, and a great deal more. No one but a stupid brute would think that all the men, women, and children in a district ought to leave the road clear in order that he may indulge in a selfish form of amusement. The cyclist, who is also a

gentleman, realises that the high road is for others as well as for himself.

On this particular ride, when I turned the corner of the road where the incline commences, I was suddenly confronted with a brewer's dray, a drove of bullocks, and a lady cyclist, all going downwards. Mam'selle, evidently frightened half out of her life at the cattle, was tacking from one side of the road to the other in a dangerous fashion. She had evidently turned the corner at full speed, instead of slowing up, and had suddenly found herself on an incline within a few yards of the drove of bullocks and the dray, both of which were of course travelling at a slow pace. She was too nervous to dismount on the hill, and, like one half crazy, was steering the machine from side to side of the road, to prevent herself being precipitated among the bullocks. The inevitable end came in less than two minutes; the front wheel went into the bank, and over went the young lady. She had escaped the dray and the drove, but she had smashed her pretty aluminium lamp, bent a crank, and given herself an unpleasant shaking. Bicycling too dangerous for ladies? Not a bit

of it! He would be a bold man who should suggest that horse-riding is too dangerous for ladies, yet if a horse is not treated with discretion he brings the rider to grief. A bicycle is quieter than the quietest horse, and, if used with care, will harm no one who mounts its saddle. Unfortunately many ladies when they ride a bicycle (and, one may add, a horse too) seem to lose all that part of valour which is called discretion. They do not seem to realise any possibility of danger, and they go gaily down hills where the strongest man would not be ashamed to dismount. We amblers see them and shudder. What wonder that the newspapers teem with accidents to our petticoated cyclists? The wonder is that they are not much more frequent.

Having assisted the young lady as much as was possible, I continued my way while she pushed her machine homewards, a sadder if not a wiser woman. I like this road to Guildford, because the lanes are so pretty, at times reminding one of Devonshire; there is none of the monotony of the high road—not that I would imply that the high road to Guildford is monotonous, far from it—but I am thinking of main

roads in general. From these particular lanes you get delightful peeps at fine old mansions of time-mellowed brick, half covered with ivy and nestling among huge trees. We Englishmen are so accustomed to the sight of these sylvan giants that we scarcely appreciate their beauty, and seldom realise what the growth of a great tree really means. Did you ever, to amuse your children, plant an acorn in your garden and watch its yearly growth? How slowly, how painfully slowly, Nature seems to work. You cannot perceive that the tiny stem is any thicker or higher this year than it was last. Look upon these old giants, and try to realise what the growth of their scaly trunks really means, how many generations of men have their green boughs waved over. To me, there is a solemnity, as well as beauty, about a great tree. It makes me feel how frail a thing is man, what a small item he is in the economy of Nature. Greater minds require an Alpine range to bring this home to them; an old oak-tree in a Surrey lane is enough for me.

It is good to put the machine against the bank, sit down at the root of one of these

mighty monarchs and listen to the whispering of the leaves over your head, examine the bark of the trunk closely, and note the insects running hither and thither, the pupæ containing life to come. Look up above at the birds in the branches, the leaves with their flies and caterpillars; look down below at the ants and beetles running among the roots, then you realise that he is more than a monarch—he is a veritable kingdom, a world in himself. But I must not dwell on such things. Nature requires no new interpreters and guides; her story has been told to all who will read. "Read the great books first," exclaims the philosopher of Walden pond, "or you may never read them." If you are a busy man, and have little time for reading, remember that life is short, and read nothing else until you have read what Nature's confidantes have to tell concerning her—Gilbert White, Ruskin, Thoreau, and the greatest of all her interpreters, the man whom Nature pressed to her heart and into whose ears she whispered her innermost thoughts, Richard Jefferies. Alas! there was one other, who might have excelled even Jefferies, but he lapsed and left Mother Nature for the flesh-

pots of the modern Babylon. Why did he not remain true to his first love?

> For Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.

This pretty series of lanes and roads across small commons to Guildford is an ideal ride for the cyclist. The roads are well made. There are no difficult hills, and the scenery is full of interest for those who have eyes to see. It was in crossing Whitemoor Common, not far from Sutton Place, that I had difficulties with a mare and a colt. It was a charming sight to see them playing together, the mother thumping the earth with her hoofs, the colt, with its long legs joined together by a narrow slip that it would be flattery to call a body, frisking around her; but when they commenced a circus performance around me and ended by standing point blank across the narrow road the joke was all on their side. I slowed up, and, after a few coaxing whistles, they were good enough to scamper across the common, leaving the road free. You can deal with a loose horse straying across the road in the

daytime, but on a dark night it is an awkward obstacle: you are on the horse and off your machine before you have realised the situation.

As I have pedalled along the lanes this summer I have noticed that catapults are very much in vogue—I never remember seeing so many before. So sure as you see a boy you see a catapult; even the little Italian boy who was helping his mother to drag along a piano organ towards Stoke, kept leaving his rope to dart into the hedge and shoot at a bird with his primitive weapon—so far had he adopted English customs. The village boys, when they are not picking blackberries, are peering excitedly into hedges and bushes, catapult in hand. They seldom kill a bird, or I should not treat the matter lightly, but they keenly enjoy the pleasures of the chase. Every boy is a hunter born; if he can hunt for nothing else he will dig for worms. It is a striking piece of evidence to the great truth that the growth of every man is as the growth of the human race, we all pass through the various stages that the human race has passed through. Here are these nineteenth-century English boys, fiercely seeking to kill birds with their

catapults; they are in the great hunting stage when our ancestors lived by the chase. Sometimes cases of arrested development occur, and the boy grows up to manhood still remaining in the hunting stage; the result is a poacher, a man who cannot settle down to the drudgery of modern industrial life, but will lie in the wet grass half the night to snare a hare. I suppose it is necessary to send poachers to prison, in order that country gentlemen may preserve their game, but it does seem rather hard that a man who for the life of him cannot get out of the catapult stage should spend a great part of his life in gaol. Magistrates, before they deal with poachers, should be forced to read that marvellous chapter in the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, where this theory of the development of the animal kingdom is so graphically explained.

What was once the village of Stoke is now a suburb of the town of Guildford, and an ugly one, of course, as most suburbs are. You ride up a gentle macadamised ascent until you reach what is called Chertsey Street, where the gradient is much steeper and you are in a region of rough granite setts leading into the

High Street. Some people ride up Chertsey Street and down the High Street. Why, it is difficult to tell, for it is an uncomfortable jolt at the best, and the traffic is often thick and always erratic. I invariably walk down the High Street, because I cannot pass the second-hand book shop without overhauling the stock. Have you ever experienced that indescribable thrill of delight at finding a second-hand bookseller in some remote country town, in which you had not dreamed of being confronted with such a joy? If not, then you have lost at least one of the pleasures of life. The worst of buying books is, that some day you may come across a copy at a lower price than you have given for yours. This was my unfortunate experience on this particular day. There stood I, face to face with two real

Guildford High Street.

bargains, which I could not take advantage of because they were already on my shelves, having been purchased at a much higher price. Unable to bear the sight, I savagely pushed the machine down the hill and over the canal bridge; and then mounting once more, turned up the narrow road on the right, called the Farnham Road.

But it is impossible for any middle-aged ambler to go very far along this road without dismounting, for it ascends at a rather acute angle to the level of the famous Hog's Back. After many miles of narrow winding lanes, the billowy hills, that are somewhat suddenly revealed as one climbs out of Guildford, appear like mountain ranges; Nature seems at a bound to have changed her mood and taken up her work on a grand scale. My travelled friends, I pray you not to smile at a simple-minded Englishman speaking of grandeur in connection with a Surrey landscape. Before you have finished the first mile you are ready to admit the legitimacy of the title Hog's Back, for *hoga*, a hill, it certainly is. When the summit is reached, however, you are fully rewarded for your exertions. You are on an excellent

riding-road, which runs for about six miles along the narrow hill-top on either side of which are superb views of typical South of England scenery. Surely there is no cycle ride to surpass this!

Directly I began to face the exhilarating hill-top breeze, I congratulated myself on my

good fortune. "Bright intervals," the meteorological officials had announced; I had captured one of them, at all events. The black clouds, that had followed threateningly in my wake all the morning, had now passed away, and, riding along in a perfect blaze of August sunshine, I had the privilege of seeing the rain, on the other side of the valley, pouring out of ragged-edged clouds upon Hindhead. Never have I had so glorious a run.

Down in the plain on the north side, as far as eye could see, was a beautiful land of green fields and yellow corn, interspersed with patches of woodland in their richest summer garb; on the south was a lovely valley, thickly clothed with foliage of every possible tint of green. I must needs dismount and rest me on a gate to enjoy this superb scene. Such, I thought, must have appeared the promised land to Moses, when he stood on Pisgah. I wandered to a neighbouring hillock to focus, as it were, the view on either hand and feast my eyes upon the distant range of hills. Who would not be proud of so lovely a land and prize the privilege of calling it "my country"! And to think that with "this precious stone set in the silver sea" our very own, we despise the task of making it in reality "this other Eden, demi-Paradise," of filling every vale and hill with happy men and women, and, instead, seek to the ends of the earth for other soil, in order that a few of us may pile up money—for what?

Would you believe it, while I was sitting on a gate, doing my thinking and half intoxicated with the scene before me, there rushed

by a youth on a bicycle. His back described the once familiar Scorcher's curve: his nose almost touched the handle-bar of his machine; and he seemed to be taking all available means of shutting out the lovely landscape through which he was passing. Had an avenging angel, or devil, been pursuing him he could not have pedalled with more pathetic fierceness. It was a sorry sight indeed for a gentle ambler, and it would have made me unhappy for some time, but, as I got into the saddle again, the breeze increased to something like a gale, and my attention was turned to the task of keeping the machine upright. The wind sang wild songs in the spokes of the wheels as I came in sight of Farnham and its hop-gardens, and it was a relief to amble along in the sheltered roads on the lower ground.

Once in the lower road it was easy to see that one was in a land of hops, and that picking-time was near. Shabby individuals, chins unshaven and hair unkempt, trudged along, each with a mystericus nobbly-looking sack slung over his shoulder. Whatever else the sack contains, you may rest assured that it holds a kettle or a saucepan, or a publican's tin

can, for boiling water at the roadside. These tramps, however fond they may be of beer, dearly love a cup of tea, or they would not carry the means of making it for the number of miles that they do. I have often been astonished at their deftness in preparing afternoon tea, which they seem to take at all hours of the day. Any one of them, duly washed and combed, would be a great acquisition at a picnic. If you have ever tried to prepare and light a fire on such an occasion you will readily appreciate the skill of these gentlemen of the road, who get a bundle of twigs blazing in the proverbial no time. The tea and the sugar are kept, each in its separate screw of paper, in the trousers pocket. Milk is dispensed with as a rule, but I have occasionally seen them scraping out a tin of "condensed." These men always seem to be in a state of anxiety about the time of day; if they condescend to speak to the traveller, they always want to know the time—they also want another penny to add to the threepence they have in order to obtain a night's lodging. You may, however, relieve yourself from any anxiety on this point, their knowledge of dry barns, out-houses, and casual

wards being of a most extensive and peculiar character. We should probably be greatly astonished if we knew the number of people who live on the road during the summer months. On a certain little peninsula formed by the winding of the river Wey, three of these gentlemen met every evening at about six o'clock during last summer, two middle-aged men and one old man with white hair. I had frequent opportunities for watching the spot, and regularly, within five minutes of each other, they would make their appearance shortly after the church clock in the distant village struck six. Sturdy and strong they looked, and the old man was decidedly fat; they were always in excellent spirits, and cracked jokes together while the saucepan was boiling for their tea. One of them always sang the same song, while he examined the contents of his bag :—

Dearest Mabel, now I'm able
To buy you a happy home,
Since they've raised my screw, love,
I've enough for two, love.
Will you marry?
Do not tarry—

He never went beyond this point in the song; but whether it was because he remembered no more, or because the arrangements for the meal distracted his attention, I could not succeed in finding out. A notable thing about the party was that they always had a newspaper, which one of them, seated comfortably among the ferns, his back supported against the trunk of a fir-tree, read aloud to the others as they sipped their tea from tin cans. And what do you think was the first item of news the reader always started with? It was invariably the cricket intelligence. To witness their excitement over the latest scores from Lord's or the Oval was an experience not easily forgotten. How these men picked up a living I could never discover; but they were obviously quite happy and well fed, notwithstanding their rags, and they never seemed to be short of tobacco.

Past the famous hop-gardens into the town of Farnham I trundled, and turning up a side road to the left, paid my respects to the inn where William Cobbett was born—the Jolly Farmer. It is a commonplace public-house, and nothing more. What a pity it is that

babies who are to become famous should not always be born in picturesque surroundings! No one could wax enthusiastic over the Jolly Farmer. By the bye, how few famous men has the licensed victualling interest produced; or is it that the sons of publicans, when they achieve greatness, take pains to conceal the occupation of their sires? But the publicans can really only claim half of Cobbett, for his father was a farmer as well as an innkeeper.[1]

The Jolly Farmers Inn
Cobbett's birth place

While I was riding along the rough central

[1] Mr. C. Starling of Farnham assures me that Cobbett was not born at the Jolly Farmer, but at a small farm belonging to his father outside the town; that the public-house was really kept by Cobbett's grandfather, who sold the beer he himself brewed.—F. W. B.

street of Farnham, my mind filled with thoughts of pugnacious Cobbett, a strange thing happened, as the novelist would say. A very unclean Italian, once an innocent peasant, now one of the horrors of civilisation, was ferociously grinding out one of Moody and Sankey's hymns. I had never, until that moment, heard any sacred song played on a street-organ. The strange thing that happened was this—the hymn-tune set up a train of thought which eventually led to a name that I had not read of, nor heard spoken, for more years than I care to reckon. It was as if an impression had long ago been made upon some of that mysterious tissue which forms fold upon fold in the brain, an impression made and sealed up, only to be unsealed at some future time by some other impression. The organ did it. In every land where the English language is spoken, there are few places where men meet for public worship, few homes the walls of which have not echoed to the words,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

I wonder how many of the singers know that

the writer of that hymn, Augustus Toplady, was running about Farnham town, a little boy of twelve years, when William Cobbett first saw light through one of the windows of the Jolly Farmer. Of all the babies that have ever been born in Farnham, baby Cobbett and baby Toplady are the only two who lived to make any stir in the world. Yes, Toplady not only wrote sweet and gentle hymns, but he wielded a doughty metaphysical sword against no less a giant than John Wesley; and when theologians disagree, it is a decided stir that they make. As to Cobbett, his life was a continual stirring up of things in general. Did he not write under the name of Peter Porcupine? Was he not accused of raising discontent in the mind of the agricultural labourer, and inciting him to acts of violence, and to the destruction of corn, stacks, machinery, and other property? Cobbett had his faults, and serious faults they were; but, as the high-priest of industry and dogged perseverance, he did much to give backbone to the young men of his day. He was the great advocate of the gospel of self-help, the great physician who recommended hard work for every physical, mental, and social disease. His

Advice to Young Men was at one time in the pocket of every thoughtful young workman; and the workmen of to-day have lost much by turning their backs upon such an excellent character-forming book.

Cobbett would certainly have been an enthusiastic cyclist had he lived in our day. As it was, he had to do his tours on horseback. He was perhaps the only man of his age, with the exception of Arthur Young and Thomas Day, who did what cyclists do now every summer—travel the roads, from village to village and town to town, getting into close touch with nature and man. Cobbett's *Rural Rides* should be in every cyclist's library. The book will suggest many excursions, and it gives a remarkable insight into the conditions of rural life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In it are described, with an always vigorous and sometimes picturesque pen, many places that are familiar to the wheelman who has travelled the Sussex and Hampshire roads. Cobbett's extraordinary knack of letting off his political steam at all sorts of odd times and places is shown at its best in some of his descriptions of scenery, as in the following characteristic example:

This pretty valley of Chilworth has a run of water, which comes out of the high hills, and which occasionally spreads into a pond; so that there is in fact a series of ponds connected by this run of water. This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful Providence as one of the choicest retreats of man, which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been by ungrateful man so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable of purposes; in carrying into execution two of the most damnable inventions that ever sprang from the mind of man, under the influence of the devil! namely, the making of gunpowder and of bank-notes!

Here, in this tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England, where the first bursting of the buds is seen in Spring; where no rigour of seasons can ever be felt; where everything seems formed for precluding the very thought of wickedness; here has the devil fixed on as one of the seats of his grand manufactory; and perverse and ungrateful man not only lends him his aid, but lends it cheerfully. As to the gunpowder, indeed, we might get over that. In some cases that may be innocently, and, when it sends the lead at the hordes that support a tyrant, meri-

toriously employed. The alders and the willows, therefore, one can see, without so much regret, turned into powder by the waters of this valley; but the bank-notes! To think that the springs, which God has commanded to flow from the sides of these happy hills, for the comfort and the delight of man—to think that these springs should be perverted into means of spreading misery over a whole nation!

I jolted along the uneven road to the hostelry where, from experience, I knew I should be well treated. Be it known to all good cyclists that there is in the town of Farnham a neat and clean inn where an excellent bed and breakfast can be obtained for three shillings. If this mine host can thrive on such a tariff, why not all? Putting up my machine in the dry coach-house, I partook of a scanty lunch, on principle, and afterwards proceeded to find Cobbett's grave.

There is no more pleasant little town in England for an afternoon stroll in the blazing sunshine. Not even a Scotsman could find fault with the cake-shops, and there is always a plentiful supply of fruit on hand. You stand in the market-place and look up the picturesque

hill at the old castle above the cedars, and think what a happy man the Bishop of Winchester must be to have such lodgment. How the position of the teachers of the Gospel has improved during the past nineteen hundred years! From fishermen and humble handicraftsmen with no lodgings to speak of, to lords living in stately and beautiful palaces! On this particular August afternoon a fine and inspiriting touch was given to the scene by a regiment of Lancers riding up the hill. Farnham has an unmistakable spice of Aldershot about it; the well-dressed, smart-looking men with bronzed faces and fierce moustachios who gaze at you sternly, almost witheringly, until you feel quite

Farnham Castle.

ashamed of your untidy, dusty cycling costume, are officers of the British Army visiting their wives and children. In time of war how anxiously must the morning newspapers be scanned in many of those comfortable-looking villas. But you take heart of grace when you remember that the bicycle has now become a part of the equipment of the British Army.

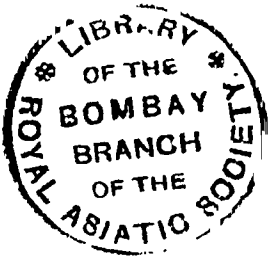
In the back streets, through which one passes to reach the church, there are some good specimens of timbered houses with red-tiled gabled roofs. Cobbett's grave is easy to find. It is covered with a rectangular monument enclosed in ugly iron palings; on either side of the inscription is a conventional inverted torch, the only attempt at ornament. As the inscription is fast disappearing,[1] I thought it would be well to write it down, and, as the children in the school-house were singing a merry chorus in their shrill treble voices, I copied the words:

Beneath this stone lie the remains of William Cobbett, son of George and Ann Cobbett. Born

[1] As a consequence of the publicity given by the press to this passage, when it first appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, the inscription has been restored.

in the parish of Farnham, 9th March, 1762. Enlisted into the 54th regiment of foot in 1784, of which regiment he became sergeant-major in 1785, and obtained his discharge in 1791. In 1794 he became a political writer, in 1832 was returned to parliament for the borough of Oldham and represented it till his death, which took place at Normandy Farm in the adjoining parish of Ash on the——

The date cannot be deciphered, but Cobbett died on 17th June, 1835. On a wall inside the church there is a marble tablet erected to his memory by his colleague in Parliament, one John Fielden. The tablet is worth seeing because it contains what surely must be an admirable likeness, carved in relief; it exactly corresponds to one's preconceived notions as to the appearance of the sturdy old Radical. There was not even a wildflower by the grave, so I could only gather a few blades of grass for the Schoolmaster, who, on my return at eventide, seized them reverently and said, with a tenderness that I had not given him credit for, that he would preserve them between the leaves of his copy of the *Advice to Young Men*.



III

THE GHOSTS OF A SURREY PARK

WE were sitting in what had once been the banqueting-hall of an Elizabethan manor-house. Although the afternoon sunshine was streaming through the stained-glass windows, we had been glad to draw our chairs up to the glowing logs on the great hearth, for the walls of the house were so thick that the heat of the sun could only pierce them on the fiercest of summer days. How out of place we all looked, sitting there in our modern tweed garments, in the presence of the picturesque ladies and gentlemen who looked down upon us from the panelled walls! I, for one, felt like an interloper, as though I had intruded into the land of ghosts, and had displayed a want of courtesy in forcing my society upon its shadowy in-

habitants. How our host had the temerity to live and move and have his being amid surroundings so hallowed by time I have never been able to understand. Had the place been mine I should not have dared to live nearer to it than the village inn, and might have had sufficient effrontery to occasionally wander through its historic chambers as an unworthy visitor. The ancient butler seemed to feel his position acutely as he brought in afternoon tea; he evidently felt that the mild-looking cups and saucers were but a feeble substitute for the wassail-bowl and flagons of sack that had once graced the huge oaken table. We had been looking from the upper windows over the wide prospect of meadow and woodland sweeping away to the distant downs, and I was venturing to praise the view and to express my admiration for certain bits of Surrey scenery. "Ah," interposed our host, "they're all very well, but have you been up to Newland's Corner?" On my replying that I had not, he looked at me reproachfully, much as a High-Church curate might look at one who should brazenly confess that he had never been to early communion. It was sufficient to con-

vince me that this particular corner was worth seeing, and I resolved to redeem my character as speedily as possible.

Most cyclists lose heavily by slavish adherence to route-maps and guides which keep them on the great main roads. This is especially the case with townsmen. When they go for a day's ride they want to get as far away from the town as possible, and with this end in view they select a main road and grind along it so far as time and strength will permit. Some of these main arteries are of course very beautiful — the Portsmouth Road between Esher and Ripley is a continuous feast of beauty for all who will ride slowly enough to appreciate it; but on the other hand the great highways are often monotonous lengths of roads, not to be compared with the byways and lanes that intersect them. It is in the shady depths of these narrow winding ways that the real delight and romance of cycling commences. You are one of a crowd on the great highway, stupidly toiling on from place to place; in the secret, shady lanes you are a solitary explorer, face to face with Nature in her prettiest moods, and you realise what a

thinly-peopled, wild, woodland country England is outside her great over-grown towns. A cyclist once confided to me that he was beginning to hate the sight of the high roads, but he was afraid of venturing off them lest he should lose himself. As if anything could be more delightful! Then he was also afraid that he might find himself in an isolated spot at lunch-time. This is the awful condition to which civilisation has brought some of us; we must receive our aliment with all the regularity of a cramming-room on a French poultry-farm, or we die. The man who cannot on occasion enjoy a lunch of bread and butter, or cheese, or even a hunch of bread and a mugful of milk, ought never to ride on a bicycle; his proper place is in the arm-chair of a Pullman-car, as near the cooking-galley as possible, or on an ocean-steamer. Sometimes it is the fear of unrideable roads that keeps the cyclist on the beaten track. More often than not there is no ground for such fears. There is, for instance, a lane on the Ripley Road, the beginning of which presents to view a formidable stretch of flints, and there are those ominous streaks of grass

down the centre which usually betoken an unrideable path. But it is all an illusion. In a couple of hundred yards or so the flints disappear, and for three miles there is a charming ride with woodland on either side. I have never met a bicyclist on this road, although at each end it touches a popular Surrey highway.

One difficulty in the way of exploring unfamiliar by-ways is that the long ride from, say, the centre of London into the country is so exhausting to all but the strongest that there is little energy left for experimental flights into unknown regions. It is far better to take the train out of the town into the country and then indulge in the delights of exploration. If the railway companies would only be a little kinder, cycling would be a much more enjoyable pastime for the townsman than it now is. Some day it will appear incredible that the railway companies of to-day saw cycling increasing in popularity year after year without making the slightest effort to take advantage of it as a new source of revenue. On the contrary, for years they placed every possible impediment

in the way of cyclists. The fares were prohibitive, and those who were willing to pay them had to coax unwilling booking-office clerks to supply the necessary tickets. Old cyclists, and even young ones, can remember how these tickets had to be dug out of the innermost recesses of the booking-office; how they had to be filled up so elaborately that the clerks could never issue them until all other passengers were supplied, and how it was a common experience for the cyclist to receive the precious document after the train had left the platform. Things are now a little better at the booking-office; but, having secured his ticket, the troubles of the cyclist commence. The porters do not love him, and he often has to carry his machine up and down long flights of stairs in wild endeavours to find the right platform. The guard receives his humble advances churlishly, doubts whether there be room for "the thing" in the van, and eventually shies it in and proceeds to pelt it with iron trunks and heavy portmanteaus. The fact that bicycles occasionally come out of a luggage-van scathless reflects infinite credit upon the

manufacturers. There is, however, one excellent feature about the railway arrangements, and that is the joyous feeling of optimism they produce in an age when pessimism is the prevailing note. Having handed over your spick and span cycle, replete with all the latest improvements, you scramble into a carriage and relieve the monotony of the journey by reflecting that it is open to any dishonest person to place a rickety, ramshackle old bone-shaker in the luggage-van, and at the next station exchange it for your high-grade Sans Egal. The guard has no responsibility; the bicycle is carried on sufferance at your own risk; at any stopping-place any one holding a bicycle ticket can take his pick of all the machines in the van. Such thoughts give zest to the journey, and your heart is filled with an exquisite thrill of confidence in the future of the human race when you clasp your own handle-bar once again, and find that all your unholy doubts have been groundless.

If any Londoner desires to wander through the beauties of Surrey and Hampshire he will be wise if he takes train to Woking, which has

the advantage of being quickly accessible, and from which excellent roads converge in all directions. Let him banish all superstitious forebodings as to the cemetery and the crematorium, both of which are separated from Woking by some miles of pine-fringed commons. This was my starting-point on the gray September morning when I set forth, like a poor sickly town-bird escaped from its narrow cage, in search of Newland's Corner. How sweet the country air tasted after the smoke of London! The clerk of the weather sympathised with the poor jaded cockney, and before I had pedalled two miles the gray masses of clouds were checkered with patches of blue; a little later and they seemed to have suddenly been transformed into white fleecy boulders, and high overhead was a long sweep of mackerel sky foreboding strong winds.

Just before reaching Mayford School, behind the red-brick walls of which an earnest attempt is being made to mould the flotsam and jetsam of the London streets into honest useful lads, I turned off to the left along a road bordered with white posts—very useful adornments on

dark wintry nights, for the ditches on either side are deep and wide. With a spurt up the hill, past a triangular patch of turf in the centre of the cross roads, I found myself in the familiar green lanes leading to Stoke and Guildford. These lanes are wondrously rich in bird-life: and the birds seem to have taken a fresh lease of their singing-powers, for the trees are as full of song as they were in the spring-time. The honeysuckle is in bloom again and the hedges are still thick with blackberries. *Clang-clang-clang!* It is the bell of the little Roman Catholic church on the top of the hill ringing the faithful to prayers; where the worshippers come from is a mystery, for there is not a house in sight. A few yards farther on a finger-post points to Burpham and Merrow. Here the road narrows, and there are some awkward corners. It is well to ring your bell freely along such lanes, for you never know who is round the next corner. It may be a thoughtless wheelman; it may be a nervous elderly female; whoever it is, you ought to let them know you are coming, for remember that your machine is almost noiseless. You will of course be abused for ring-

ing. The good dame will exclaim: "Drat the man, surely there's enough room for him to pass! Does he want all the road to himself!" But you may console yourself with the knowledge that, if you had not given warning of your approach, she would have declared that you were no gentleman to startle a lady by rushing past her in that way; "Why doesn't the wretch ring his bell!" The world is difficult to please, but it is best to be on the safe side; no one can reasonably find fault with you for making your presence known.

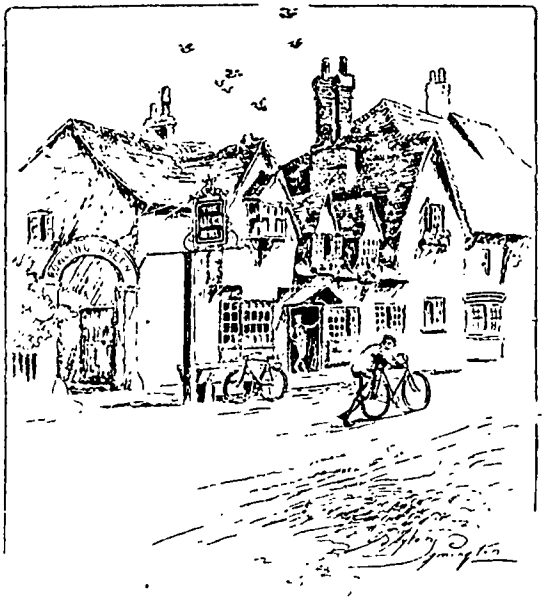
Turning up the lane leading to Burpham I thought to get a glimpse of Sutton Court, the beautiful Elizabethan manor-house whose story has been written by Mr. Frederic Harrison. Watching the landscape on my left I was presently rewarded by a sight of the roof and ruddy gables peeping out from a gap in the trees. From this road the house is unapproachable; but if you are ever in the neighbourhood of Sutton Green, three-quarters of a mile to the left, do not fail to open the white gate facing the village street, to climb the hill and bear to the left on reaching the little church at the summit. About a quarter of a mile along

the path, facing an avenue of fine old trees, you will suddenly find on your right hand a sight such as you rarely see even in England. It is the colour that first impresses you, the warm red walls softened by the mellowing hand of Time. In a moment you have stepped back over two centuries; you are in touch with the age of Shakespeare, Raleigh, and Sidney. If a gentleman in doublet and hose, with a sword at his side or a hawk on his wrist, strolled across the courtyard you would not be in the least astonished. But the beauties of Sutton Court are worthy a poet's flight; they are beyond the reach of my poor pedallian muse.

Wreaths of smoke are curling upward from the fields this morning; piles of rubbish, burning on all sides, fill the air with an unmistakable autumnal odour. A regiment of cows line the edges of the fields on either side of the road. They greet me with bovine indifference, almost amounting to contempt; evidently I am not the party they expected. I pause on the little bridge crossing the Wey, to look down upon the pretty banks, green and wooded to the water's edge; and a few crumbs of biscuit bring up a shoal of young roach, who

fight for the spoil with an eager greediness that I had hitherto thought peculiar to chickens.

A few minutes' ride beyond the bridge



brought me to the Green Man at the side of the road leading from Ripley to Guildford. I crossed the road delicately, for unfortunately the Scorcher is occasionally to be found there-

abouts, and I had no wish to find his front wheel buckled in my frame. Ripley is now shorn of much of its old glory. In the days of the old high machine it was a terminus for the London rider; it is now only a half-way house. On Saturday afternoons and on Sundays all the very latest things in cycledom are to be seen on this road. Some of the smart young men smile at my five-year-old crock. The handle-bars have not the latest curve, the saddle is not built on the new anatomical principle, the smooth tyres are quite antediluvian, the spokes of the wheels have not the latest twist, and the whole machine is twice as heavy as a machine should be. A saucy youth once declared that it must have come out of the Ark. But I often find these gay folk wheeling their machines home in two sections, or hammering at them sadly by the roadside with spanners and pocket-knives, or making their fingers sore in mending punctures. As for my own ancient friend, it has during its five years of life often toiled over some of the worst roads in England without mischance, and has only cost three shillings for repairs. No! wild horses shall not induce me to advertise the name of

the maker; I only note these facts to show that accidents, breakages, and punctures are not the inevitable accompaniments of cycling, and that it is not necessary to have a new machine every year.

Having crossed the Guildford road with a whole skin I found myself in a lane winding through a charming wood. I caught glimpses of shady groves, carpeted with vivid green moss, wherein Titania on moonlight nights might well hold her fairy court. At the end of the lane I turned sharply to the right, passing under a railway arch, on to a thistle-covered common, across which a good road leads to the village of Merrow. At the top of a stiffish incline, I suddenly found myself in front of the picturesque Horse and Groom inn, with its three-gabled front and diamond-paned windows. Opposite to the inn is the village church, about which I could find nothing more remarkable than that the borders of the paths in the churchyard were formed of old tomb-stones. Two hundred yards beyond the church I found that the pedals were so hard to push round that I began to think that the bearings must have become unduly tightened; the fact

being, however, that the ascent was much steeper than it appeared to the eye. I was astonished on reaching the open common to find myself on such high ground, not having noticed that from the Guildford road I had been continuously ascending by a series of gentle hills.

I was now almost at the top of Merrow Down, and looking backward, as I still ascended, the view opened out more and more at every fifty yards. There seemed, indeed, to be no end to its developments. It recalled the old-fashioned transformation scenes of my childhood, wherein, as sheet after sheet of gauze was raised, fresh and more dazzling beauties were revealed. The sun was now shining gloriously, giving the great rolling clouds magnificent coats of fleecy white and gold. The combined efforts of electric-light men and gymnastic skirt-dancers have never produced any effects equal to these, and yet men and women will fight and struggle like mad things, and sit for hours in a "hall" reeking with unsavoury odours that they may watch these puny efforts of man instead of turning their faces to such marvellous effects of light and shadow as can be seen on these sunny hills.

At the top of Merrow Down, at the opening of a grassy lane, some good soul has placed a comfortable seat well sheltered from the wind, where one can rest and recover breath and feast one's eyes on the masses of bracken, now changing from green to gold and russet. A

hundred yards farther along the road, turning sharply to the right, I found myself at the famous Newland's Corner, and decided at once that it had not been overrated. You are on the brow of a down of respectable dimensions, a Surrey mountain, with a rich rolling woodland country stretching away to the distant

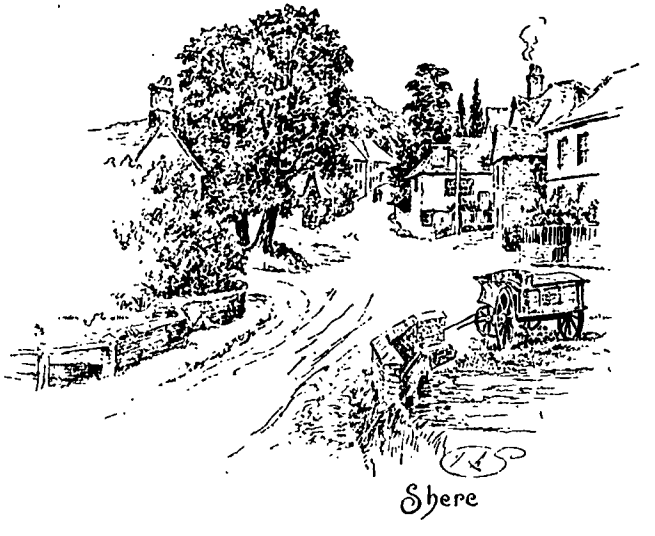
hills. To gaze upon such a sunlit scene is to feel what love of country really is, although you cannot define it. In other lands you admire the scenery; in your own land you love it, as though the sense of possession imparted a peculiar felicity. What a world of meaning there is in Touchstone's reference to Audrey—"An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own." It is worth the climb if only to see St. Martha's Hill with the picturesque pilgrims' church on the summit, and the old pilgrims' road winding in and out among the foliage. Hence came worshippers from as far west as Cornwall on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury. It is said that some of the worthy souls mingled business with religion, and brought ingots of tin with them as well as rosaries. Down in the valley below, thrusting its smoky head through the trees, is the shaft of the Chilworth gunpowder-mill which so enraged Cobbett. Unlike most views that are seen from high ground, the landscape here does not fade away in the distance, but rises across the valley, hill upon hill, in a semicircle, like a stupendous amphitheatre. Newland's Corner is a grassy raised

platform, from the centre of which a Gargantuan orator might address an audience of giants seated on the surrounding hills. Round the corner to the left is a clump of shady trees, a capital place for planting the cycle while you explore the hill-top. If you walk a few yards to the north you get a complete change of view—a great wooded plain stretching far away to the Thames valley; you are on a veritable Pisgah. This is the place to feast on blackberries, which being fully exposed to the sun, are far riper than those in the shaded lanes below; moreover, they are too high above the valley for the village children.

The hill down to Albury is justly labelled *dangerous*, but with care you can make your way down it in safety. Woe betide the rider, however, who for an instant loses command of his machine; none but the coolest heads should attempt this long and treacherous slope. All the way down the views are delightful, and almost at the foot I discovered a huge hollow at the roadside under a thick-boughed wide-spreading yew. It was quite a pleasant weather-proof room, which would have delighted Thoreau, who would never have

troubled to build his house had he been able to discover such a one as this not made with hands. Although the wind was blowing hard the place was wonderfully free from draughts, a fact doubtless highly appreciated by some recent lodgers who had left the warm ashes of a fire behind them. The only fault that a cyclist could find with it was, the rather serious one that the entrance was too small to admit a machine. Here I shared my lunch with a fine old frog, who with a confidence born of gratitude allowed me to look for some minutes at his beautiful eyes. Jefferies declared that any wild thing in the woods and fields will come fearlessly to you if you will only keep perfectly still; but you must not so much as wink your eyelids. Thoreau was remarkably successful in winning the confidence of birds and squirrels, while old George Borrow solemnly avowed, and even put it into print, that he could tame the wildest of wild Irish horses by whispering some mysterious jargon into their ears. These three men were all great lovers of Nature, and studied her mysterious book at first-hand; they loved her better than they loved the towns and congregations of men. Is it possible that some

as yet undetected law drew them towards her, and at the same time led her wild children to trust the love and tenderness of these interpreters of the fields and woodlands?



Shere

Down a shady lane, and across the road leading to Albury, I found the charming village of Shere, which surely contains some of the prettiest cottages in all Surrey. The gardens were overflowing with the flowers that we have

always fondly believed to be the native growth of old England, but which the learned botanists now assure us are quite modern importations. It is too bad to tell us that the wallflower came from Spain, the toad-flax from across the Channel, the sweet-pea from Sicily, mignonette from Egypt, lavender from the shores of the Mediterranean, that the musk has only been in England for seventy years, that the nasturtium came from Peru, the balsam from Asia, and, worst of all, that London Pride is in no sense kin to the city of London, but is so named after a nurseryman, one Mr. London, who was the first to introduce it. All this confirms me in the opinion I have always held, that botany —that is, the botany of the text-book and the class-room—is the real dismal science, compared with which political economy is a delirious and intoxicating pastime. Shere Church and the White Horse Inn you will find in the sketch-book of every artist who has wandered about Surrey, and they are indeed worthy their fame. In the little village street, leading up to the churchyard, I was glad to find the barber's shop adorned with the old-fashioned chirurgeon's pole and dangling brass soap-dish. The church

was decorated for harvest-festival with wondrous trophies of vegetables, flowers, and fruit; every pew had its nosegay, and pumpkins and marrows of huge proportions invaded even the pulpit. The fact that the village boys had not yielded to the tempting allurements of the apples and pears that were lying about as if asking to be eaten, reflects infinite credit on their power of self-control. Have the board schools succeeded in eradicating the love of stolen fruit from the heart of boyhood? 'Tis an ancient vice, for even St. Augustin was sorely troubled, when he came to write his *Confessions*, to find that he had to relate how he pilfered apples from the neighbours' gardens on his way home from school. I had been told to look out for some curious old stained glass in Shere Church, showing the quaint device of one Sir Reginald Bray. There it was, sure enough, in a little window beyond the pulpit; and, craning over a bank of potatoes and cabbages, I was able to discover the initials *R. B.* and a drawing of a queer-looking instrument called a *bray*, used for braying out hemp, in the days when farmers' wives made their own gowns.

Leaving Shere I turned homeward in the

direction of Albury, once famous as the dwelling-place of Martin Tupper. The *Proverbial Philosophy* has so long since disappeared even from the bookstalls that it is difficult to realise that forty years ago no American visitor thought of leaving England without paying a pilgrimage to Albury. The book probably had a larger sale than any other issued in the first half of the century; not a drawing-room table but contained a copy in all the glory of calf and gilt edges. And now,—lives there a man under fifty years of age who has read Martin Tupper? I pulled up at the cross-roads before reaching Albury, for I knew that I must be near the Silent Pool, the birthplace of so many legends. In the little dingle opposite to the finger-post I found a highly respectable tramp and his family taking afternoon tea, although it was only half-past two. It was his spectacles and silk hat that gave the man such a superior air—that is, for a tramp. He and his wife and the four small children were all very dirty, but very happy. Not only had they a plentiful supply of tea and bread and butter, but a goodly pile of water-cress; and it was edifying to see how mighty particular the

old gentleman was in securing the proper quantity of salt from the family salt-cellar before he put each spray of cress into his mouth, as if he thoroughly realised the value of chloride of sodium as a digestive agent. I asked him if he knew the road to the Silent Pool, in the hope of having a chat with him; but he was so engrossed at the moment in saving the screw of newspaper containing the salt from a gust of wind, that he could only roll his eyes and jerk his battered hat in the direction of the high hedge at the right-hand side of the road.

Up a rough path and past a lodge, where the keeper insisted on my leaving my machine, I found a remarkable sheet of water almost entirely surrounded by high banks all one mass of lovely foliage. It was indeed like a glimpse of fairyland, and when I went forward to the innermost part of the pool I felt that the sight of a water-baby on the scene would not have surprised me. The water is so perfectly clear and transparent that at the depth of three or four feet, and not near the banks only, but in the centre, you can see every pebble, every plant at the bottom of the pool, and watch the

fishes swimming about as if in a lake of liquid glass. There is something almost uncanny in this peculiar transparency and stillness; but I am assured by my scientific friends that there is no magic in it, that it is all to be explained by the formation of the banks and the peculiar chemical character of the bed of the pool. The popular explanation is of a very different character; it is a story of unrequited love, a leap from the highest part of the bank, a maiden's body floating in the moonlight, and transparent water undisturbed by a ripple ever since.

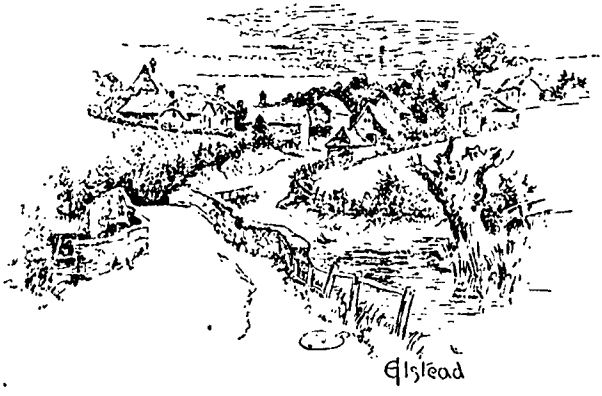
A very short distance from the Silent Pool I found the Catholic Apostolic Cathedral, its cold, modern grandeur forming a striking contrast to the quiet simplicity of the ancient village church at Shere. The hard outlines of the cathedral are somewhat relieved by a thick growth of ivy, among which I found many climbing roses. The whole place is a remarkable monument of religious enthusiasm; yet the Irvingites do not appear to increase and multiply, unless it is that they do not proclaim their religious opinions from the house-tops. Has any one ever met a gentleman at dinner, or in an omnibus, tram-car, or train, who declared

himself to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem and a worshipper at Albury Cathedral? The village of Albury looks suspiciously like a model village planned and built by a wealthy landlord, its ornamental chimney-pots reminding one of Chenies. The smooth road through the village and on by the side of the river, overshadowed by the splendid timber of Albury Park, gives a few miles of ideal riding. As you approach Chilworth you get a fine view of St. Martha's Hill and Newland's Corner from below, and the riding is good right on to Shalford, the village of latticed windows and quaint frontages.

At Shalford I turned off the Guildford road and made for Godalming, in the face of a strong south-westerly breeze. September was only four days old, and I noted for the first time the falling leaves, signs of the dying summer. Through the familiar streets of Godalming I hurried on to Elstead, for it had suddenly dawned upon me that I was not many miles from Moor Park, which must still be haunted by the ghosts of dear Dorothy Osborn, Sir William Temple, Swift, and Stella. From Elstead the road wound about through lovely

woods, and at the top of a steep hill I discovered a grand view of Hindhead across the vale. Then came a timber-lined road right on to the little mill that stands between the entrance of Waverley Abbey and Moor Park. It was to the old house among these giant trees that Sir William Temple, after so many years of patient courtship, brought as his bride the sweet-natured, sensible young lady whom we now know so well. Owing to the happy preservation of Dorothy's charming letters, this young lady of the seventeenth century is brought nearer to us than the women of our own day; we are not so familiar with our own sisters'

daily thoughts, feelings, and sympathies as we are with Dorothy's. Sir William had turned his back on politics, and he and Dorothy were an elderly couple leading a quiet life in this Surrey park, amusing themselves with their

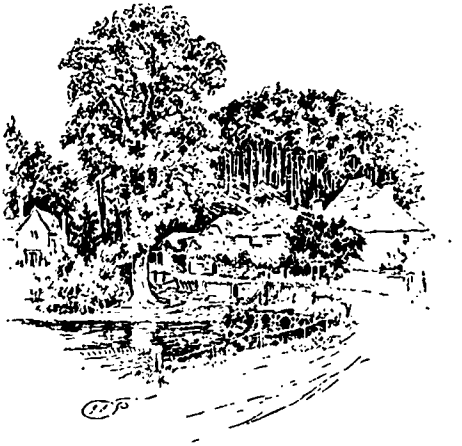


garden and their books, when the inevitable poor relation made his appearance in the shape of Jonathan Swift, a raw, awkward Irish youth. What else could the poor young man do? His widowed mother had only an annuity of £20, and he had no means of adding to it. The rich relative took him in, and made him private secretary and keeper of the family accounts,

which offices his patron declared that he fulfilled with diligence and honesty.

One would like to believe that the garden of this quaint red-tiled house with the gabled attics, standing by the roadside, was the scene of Swift's first meeting with little Esther Johnson. Dorothy Temple was dead, and her sister-in-law, Lady Giffard, was keeping house for the widower. Her ladyship had a confidential servant, Mrs. Johnson, whose daughter Esther, a girl of thirteen, must often have rambled about these shady walks. Something about the child attracted the private secretary; he set himself the task of educating her, and ended by loving and immortalising her as Stella, the heroine of one of the saddest, strangest love-stories that history has to tell. As I stood on the little white-railed bridge, looking down at the running stream, I thought of Swift's cry of agony as he stood by Stella's deathbed—"For my small remainder of years I shall be weary of life, having for ever lost that conversation which could alone make it tolerable!" What this meant, coming from the lips of such a man, we can form but a faint conception. It was here, at Moor Park, that

he wrote *The Battle of the Books* and the daring *Tale of a Tub;* it is good to think that here also he spent perhaps the happiest hours of his stormy life, teaching little Esther Johnson, and moulding the life that was destined to form so great a part of his own.



Entrance to Moor Park

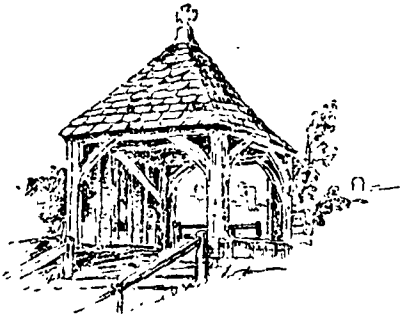
These grand old oaks and elms, whose shadows fell upon the men and women who live with us again in our beloved books, they are indeed precious links binding us to the great dead who are so often the companions of our firesides. The memories that linger in these leafy paths and stately avenues give the one touch needed to satisfy the heart as Nature satisfies the eyes. I was glad to have seen the old place while it still looked much the same

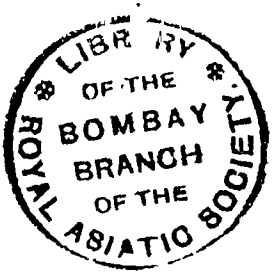
as it must have appeared to the eyes of Dorothy Osborn and Stella, of Sir William and Swift, for standing among the trees is a board with the ominous legend, *This eligible freehold land to be sold or let on lease for building purposes in plots.*

Almost as enjoyable as the day's ride is the quiet hour in the evening spent in recalling the scenes one has passed through. As the sun was setting, I took down the letters of Dorothy Osborn, and read between the lights, and with renewed interest, my favourite passage. How many of the highly-educated young ladies of the present day could write to their lovers (if they ever fall in love) so sensibly and so charmingly as this?

There are many of so careless and vain a temper that the least breath of good fortune swells them with so much pride that if they were not put in mind sometimes by a sound cross or two that they are mortal, they would hardly think it possible; and though 'tis a sign of a servile nature when fear produces more of reverence in us than love, yet there is more danger of forgetting oneself in a prosperous fortune than in the contrary, and affliction may be the surest (though not the

pleasantest) guide to heaven. Many people fancy a perfect happiness here, but I never heard of anybody that ever had it more than in fancy, so that it will not be strange if you should miss on't. One may be happy to a good degree, I think, in a faithful friend, a moderate fortune, and a retired life; further than this I know nothing to wish; but if there be anything beyond it, I wish it you.





IV

AMONG THE POETS

IF you take your one-inch ordnance map (sheet No. 269) and, placing one foot of a pair of compasses on the town of Staines, describe a half circle of three inches radius westward, your line will pass through four places—Bishopsgate, Cooper's Hill, Horton and Chertsey, all in a good riding country, and all possessing exceptional literary interest. I had often cast longing eyes upon this poets' corner, where the four counties meet, and thought what a unique run it would be. At last the opportunity came, and after an early breakfast I proceeded to examine my "machine," as all the world has agreed to call it. Has it ever occurred to you how exceedingly unfortunate bicycling has been in its nomenclature? This marvel of skilful

mechanism, this monument of man's ingenuity, this instrument that gives you almost birdlike powers, that responds to your gentlest touch, that becomes at last your confidential friend, your fetich—to call it a mere machine, a bicycle, a bike—it is too bad. All true lovers of the wheel are, however, agreed on this, however they may differ in politics, metaphysics, and religion, the word "bike" must be killed outright; if any man persist in using it he must be knocked out of wills, excommunicated from churches, boycotted from decent society, treated as De Quincey would have treated the murderers who might some day end in breaking the Sabbath.

The philosophers of the future will write most learned treatises on the influences of the bicycle in that reversion to fetichism which is one of the queer characteristics of the present day. They will point out how the daily lubricating of the bearings developed into a sacred offering accompanied by mystic rites, and they will draw fancy pictures of men and maidens decorating their wheels with flowers with a view to persuading the tyres not to indulge in punctures. In spite of this

danger of "reversion to a primitive type," as the scientists put it, who can help admiring the tender care displayed by the ladies when they are sending their beloved cycles on a railway journey? Have you noticed how they swathe handle-bars, frame, and even spokes with wonderful bands of linen, for all the world like the swaddling clothes of a week-old baby? What has become of all the pet dogs since ladies took to cycling? Are they lying undecorated and unmourned in the Dogs' Home?

It was a bright, cold September morning, overhead was a cobalt sky flecked with fleecy clouds, but low down on the horizon inky rain-clouds were huddling together in a threatening manner. It is well not to be unduly alarmed at such ominous signs, for these rain-laden masses often have a delightful habit of passing round along the sky-line without interfering with your pleasure. At the same time, especially if you are escorting lady riders, it is always wise to study weather signs before starting on a lengthy run. All landladies of country inns are not willing to lend their spare wardrobe to damp damsels, and the landlords are generally of so corpulent a habit that the benighted cyclist cuts a ludicrous

figure in his borrowed trousers and vest, more like Guido Fawkes than St. Valentine.

Out on the common, where the purple heather was here and there speckled with lingering gorse blooms, old men with bronzed faces and rheumatic legs were vigorously cutting peat. It is an operation that requires some skill, this cutting of rectangular slabs of topsoil, and a spade of peculiar make is used. The blade of the spade is shaped like an ace of clubs, the lower part of the handle is curved and at the top is a wooden cross-bar. The point of the blade is thrust into the earth, and then the peat-cutter, with his breast upon the cross-bar, pushes the spade forward and raises up slices of peat with remarkable precision. It is a strange sight to see these men at work in the middle distance, each pressing his breast against the cross-bar of his spade, as if he were paying off old scores on mother earth. One reason for loving these Surrey commons is that they give to the weary eyes of the penned-up town-man such glorious views of what old Addison so graphically called "the spacious firmament on high." Most people are capable of realising something of the beauty of the landscape, but

few give much attention to the marvellous skyscapes which our much-abused climate gives to us on almost every day in the year. It is only when he finds himself transferred to some clime where the heavens are a blank monotonous expanse of blue for months together that the average Briton realises the loveliness of the clouded skies of the old motherland. What could be more care-evading than to skim along these well-made roads, with broad stretches of heather-covered land on either side and the great blue dome above half veiled by billowy white and golden clouds.

While I was thinking of these things and listening to the "pop-pop" of guns in the distance, proclaiming that partridge-shooting had really commenced, I suddenly became aware of a lady cyclist some distance ahead who was springing off her machine and hopping on to the saddle again at every few yards, in a somewhat eccentric manner. I soon discovered the cause of these erratic movements. Some cows had strayed out of a field on to the roadside. When the lady approached a cow she sprang off her machine and walked gingerly by the innocent animal, mounting again when a safe dis-

tance was reached. As there were about a dozen cows on the road, this, although a tactful, must have been a rather trying performance. I mention this incident in no scoffing spirit, but simply to allay the qualms of those good people who fear that cycling unsexes a woman.

Passing the village hall, the doors of which always seem to be carefully closed against both villagers and visitors, I veered to the right and dismounted at the gate of Chobham churchyard, in order to take a peep at the church. The porch is a spacious one, with well-sheltered seats on either side. It was saddening to see the untidy appearance of the entrance to what should be the holiest place in the village. The stone floor was muddy, and the litter of spent matches, tobacco-dust and cigarette-ends implied that the youths of the village use the porch of the church as a smoking saloon on wet evenings. And the village hall is closed! While I was standing near the altar, the silence was broken by the creaking of a door, and there entered a ruddy-faced, stout-built man who I at once decided was the village carpenter on a repairing expedition. He mounted the staircase leading to the gallery under the belfry, and I could see

him behind a thin red curtain take off his coat and roll up his shirt-sleeves in a business-like manner. The next moment I found that he had come upon a much more serious business than the mending of a rotten board. He clasped a bell-rope in his hands, and, after three or four silent pulls, the bell reached the ringing point and a long, solemn peal made the old walls tremble. This was repeated three times, then the ringer paused before he rang two sharp peals, and after another pause again three prolonged, reverberating solemn peals. There was something very impressive in the scene, the silent church, the sunlight streaming through the latticed windows, the ringer up there in the gallery delivering his awful message to the whole village, that some familiar face would never again be seen in the little high street, that some neighbour had passed away, and that in at least one house tears were falling in the presence of Death. The old custom must have been more impressive still, when the "passing-bell" proclaimed that a soul was passing away, and called upon all within hearing to pray that it might pass in peace.

Remounting my machine, I rode through

the village, over the white-railed bridge, and along the pretty winding lane that leads to the hamlet of Burrow-hill. From the sign-post at the foot of the hill it is a somewhat steep incline to Chobham common. If you are

Chobham Common

young and strong you can ride it with ease, but if you are well on the way to baldness and your waistcoats are at all expansive you had better walk. You need not grieve over this, because a stroll along this fir and elm-lined road is worth having; it gives you an opportunity of taking in the beauties of the little

rush-lined lake on the right-hand side, and you will find a plentiful sprinkling of wildflowers about the gnarled roots of the trees. At the top of the hill you are rewarded with a view of breezy Chobham common, with its pine-topped hills, and its wealth of heather.' No one need pine for sea breezes when they can drink in such invigorating ærial nectar inland. The road across the common is decidedly loose in dry weather, but on this particular morning it was easy to ride so long as the carters took their fair share of the ruts at the sides. Towards the end of this roughish road I found the brick-makers busy at work, making bricks with the simple tools that probably differ little from those used by the Israelites in old Egypt. This must be a bleak spot for the brickmakers in wintry weather, but beneath the summer sun the roof supported on four poles forms an ideal workshop.

Passing over the railway bridge, I rode down the hill into Sunningdale to the finger-post by the church, with its gray finger pointing to Blacknest. Behind the church, at the head of the rising ground, lies the village of Sunning-hill, which holds a secret I have tried in vain

to fathom. Somewhere in Sunninghill lived George Ellis, whom Sir Walter Scott described as "one of the most accomplished scholars and delightful companions whom I have ever known," but I have never been able to locate the house. Between 1801 and 1815, the year when Ellis died, the village postman carried along this road some of the most delightful letters that Scott ever wrote, and never a journey south did Sir Walter make without hurrying up yonder hill with all possible speed to grasp the hand of the dear friend whom he loved as a brother. The friendship was first made through the good offices of

Heber at a peculiarly interesting period of Scott's life, when the *Border Minstrelsy* was being prepared for publication and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* was in embryo. It was to Sunninghill the letter came in which Scott lamented—"One of our best reciters has turned religious in his later days, and finds out that old songs are unlawful. If so, then, as Falstaff says, is many an acquaintance of mine damned."

A ride of a mile and a half brought me to Blacknest. I had looked forward to a feast of blackberries somewhere along this quiet lane, but the cottagers' children had forestalled me, and not a single ripe one seemed to have evaded their deft little fingers. You have to get up very early in the morning to secure ripe blackberries, even in these parts. Entering Windsor Park by the Blacknest gate, it is a charming three miles' ride along a good gravel road to Bishopsgate. I did not fail to dismount on the bridge that crosses Virginia Water, to admire the view on either side, and then wheeling the cycle under some trees on the banks of the lake I lay down quietly in the grass to watch for squirrels. They came very soon, as they always do in these solitudes, and delighted me

for some time with their pretty, nervous skippings. There is nothing more Arcadian within an easy ride of the Great Wen than the banks of Virginia Water, and, Bank holidays excepted, you can roam about these glades of silver birch, elms, oaks and limes for hours, with birds, squirrels, and rabbits for companions.

Virginia Water
Near Blacknest Bridge

It was probably in this corner of Windsor Park, it being the nearest to Sunninghill, that on a certain summer morning in the year 1802 a happy party of four, two ladies and two gentlemen, strolled along, and presently, seating themselves under one of these old oak trees, one of the gentlemen drew a manuscript from

his pocket, and in strong northern accents read the now world-famous lines:—

> The way was long, the wind was cold,
> The Minstrel was infirm and old;
> His wither'd cheek, and tresses grey,
> Seem'd to have known a better day;
> The harp, his sole remaining joy,
> Was carried by an orphan boy.
> The last of all the bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry.

The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Ellis and Walter Scott and his wife Charlotte, and it is almost certain that this was the first time that the music of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* fell upon human ears. I had almost forgotten to mention the dog. Camp, Scott's bull-terrier, had come to Sunninghill with them, and it is scarcely probable that he had not been allowed to join in the morning walk. How the poet enjoyed these visits to Sunninghill may be gathered from one of his letters to Ellis:—"How often do Charlotte and I think of the little paradise at Sunninghill and its kind inhabitants; and how do we regret, like Dives, the gulf which is placed betwixt us and friends

with whom it would give us such pleasure to spend much of our time. It is one of the vilest attributes of the best of all possible worlds that it contrives to split and separate and subdivide everything like congenial pursuits and habits for the paltry purpose, one would think, of diversifying every little spot with a share of its various productions. I don't know why the human and vegetable departments should differ so excessively. Oaks and beeches, and ashes and elms, not to mention cabbages and turnips, are usually arrayed *en masse*; but where do we meet a town of antiquaries, a village of poets, or a hamlet of philosophers?" George Ellis lived to see his dear friend Walter Scott reach the zenith of his powers, and then the inevitable came. In the month of April, 1815, Scott was looking forward to another happy holiday at Sunninghill; but never again were the two friends to walk these pleasant glades together. Two terse sentences in Lockhart close the story of one of the most perfect friendships in the history of literature: "Mr. George Ellis died on the 15th of that month at his seat of Sunninghill. This threw a cloud over what would otherwise have been a period of unmixed enjoyment."

Riding on towards Bishopsgate the view of forest scenery, the glimpses of weird-looking, half-decayed trees, the variety of foliage, and the saucy rabbits that squatted in the road critically examining me until they were almost under my wheels, made me vow not to neglect this delightful run in the future. When you reach the finger-post pointing to Cumberland Lodge, it is well to examine your map carefully and be sure to take the right road for Bishopsgate, which is but a few minutes' ride in the direction of Egham. Close by the gate (for it is a veritable gate of Windsor Park) there is an opening of greensward, upon which I found a group of graceful deer browsing. Resting the cycle against a giant elm I walked among the great-eyed fawns until I reached the brow of the hill, from which, between the trees, there is a far-reaching view of woodland scenery. Shelley and Mary Godwin must have stood upon this spot many times, hand in hand, enjoying a happiness greater than any that had entered into their lives before. Walking beneath the shade of these beeches, elms, and planes, many of the lines of "Alastor" were moulded. Bishopsgate will always have a

peculiar interest for lovers of Shelley, for it was here that, for the first time in his life, he found peace and rest. After the awful journey through France to Switzerland, and back to England, living a hand-to-mouth existence, escaping death by drowning only to be half starved; after the terrible six months of poverty and bailiff-dodging in London, what a paradise these two strange beings must have found in this delightful solitude. All pecuniary cares had vanished, and, with peace and love in his home, the great genius began to unfold his mighty powers. The furnished lodging where he and Mary lived is, I believe, not to be identified; it was probably a far less pretentious dwelling than any of the "eligible properties" that have since sprung up on the outer side of the Gate. But these trees and the greensward and the wide-spreading vale are to-day as the two lovers saw them. "Alastor" is not to be fully appreciated until this place is visited and the events that preceded Shelley's sojourn here are taken into account. It was a wondrous young seer who wrote that final sentence of the preface: "Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives and

prepare for their old age a miserable grave." How many successful men, who have devoted their talents to money-grubbing, will in their declining years admit the force of this wild young man's philosophy. As I sat down on the root of a tree to smoke my morning pipe, I thought of that vivid description of Alastor's brief interview with his ideal, when he

> . . . saw by the warm light of their own life,
> Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
> Of woven wind; her outspread arms now bare,
> Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
> Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
> Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.

Yes, this was just the place where one might write that sort of thing—if one had the mind, of course. Then there is that graphic stroke of the pen describing in so few words the darkness of a wood—"the meeting boughs and implicated leaves wove twilight o'er the poet's path." Even a stock-jobber in the Kaffir circus would feel that this was "rather a neat way of putting the thing." The passage commencing: "The oak, expanding its immeasurable arms, embraces the light beech"

is unquestionably a description of woodland scenery to be found within five minutes' walk of Bishopsgate. As I took a last look round and mounted my cycle I felt that I should read "Alastor" that night with fresh interest, with a keener eye for its beauties, with a sense of possession such as I had never felt before.

I rode through the Bishop's gate—Shelley and Mary always spelled it Bishopgate, notwithstanding the authority of maps—and along the road past the little inn, until I reached a common on the farther side of which I discovered a finger-post pointing to Cooper's Hill. Two minutes' ride down a shady lane and the famous panorama suddenly appeared before my eyes. I had some difficulty in avoiding collision with a low-hung pony-carriage containing an elderly lady and a nurse. They pulled up suddenly, and the lady ejaculated, "There, my dear—there!" indicating the view of winding river, meadowland, woods and hills, with a wave of her hand. It was evidently a grateful patient trying to give some pleasure to the nurse who had rendered priceless service. She eagerly watched the flush of delight on the nurse's face, and perhaps felt that after all she

had been able to repay—somewhat. To take in the whole scene it is necessary to pass through the wicket-gate on the left, walk a few yards along the path and ascend a mound. Thence you have a wondrous semicircle of scenery that can never pall. Windsor Castle is at your left hand, the river flows in a veritable silvery stream at the foot of the hill, appearing and disappearing among clumps of luxuriant foliage. The brilliant green meadows below, stretching down to the river bank, where the brown and white cows stand nibbling the short grass, form such a picture of rural innocence and simplicity that it is difficult to realise that one is gazing upon the scene of one of the most important events in English history. This is none other than the famous mead where Magna Charta was signed. It being a favourable spot for horse racing it was called running mead, from which name Runnimede was a short step. So say one school of etymologists, who are opposed with as much fierceness as so peaceful a science permits by all the others, who have their own pet ideas on the subject. Even the identical place where the veritable document was signed

has been the subject of as keen a warfare as that carried on by the Big-endians and the Little-endians, for some say that the deed was not done on this side of the river, but on the spot of earth now covered by the little white cottage peeping out from among the trees on the opposite bank.

The church with the red-tiled roof and the gray spire, nestling among the trees to the left of the Runnimede cottage, is the parish church of Wraysbury. On the great hill in the far distance, to the right of the cottage, is the town of Harrow—if you have good eyes you can plainly see the pointed spire of its church. As I sat on the mound of green-covered earth taking in the beauty of the scene a sturdy farm-labourer suddenly bobbed up before me, having climbed the steep face of the hill. I ventured to compliment him on the fine view. Yes, he admitted, it was fine, for you could see the iron tower being built at Wembley Park, and if you came up at night you could see the Big Wheel at Earl's Court, "all lighted up, like a big star." I tried to stir up his enthusiasm on the Windsor Castle side of the view; but he remained as cool as the pro-

verbial cucumber. You see, it had probably been before his eyes every day of his life, and he was no worse than the wealthy citizens who pass through St. Paul's churchyard every day without realising that there is a building in the centre which should be to them "a joy for ever." As you walk along the narrow path you notice that there is a high bank at the back reaching far above your head. The view up there would be finer still, but the top of the bank is so thickly planted with trees that you cannot peer out between their branches. I wonder whether the labourer's story was true—that the owner of this land planted the trees there purposely to obstruct the view, because the local authorities would not allow him to close the footpath along which there had been a "right of way from time immemorial."

Shelley and Mary Godwin must often have walked over here—it is not more than a mile from Bishopsgate—and it is not improbable that this lovely scene prompted the poet to plan that excursion to the source of the Thames, which gave him renewed health and spirits, and gave to us the beautiful "Lines written on a summer evening in Lechdal-

Churchyard." Do you remember that characteristic scheme? Once fairly afloat, and captivated by the glamour of the Thames as it is in August, Shelley felt that a trip to the Cotswold Hills would not suffice, they must have more of this delightful voyaging. He decided to pursue the journey beyond Lechdale by a canal which would enable them to reach the Severn, thence by divers canals and rivers they were to pass through North Wales on to Durham and the Lakes; the Tweed and the Forth were to be reached in due course, and the nose of the boat was not to be turned homeward until the Falls of the Clyde had been honoured by the presence of the party. Was ever such a madcap! And yet, a few months later this harum-scarum fellow, haunted by goblins and ghosts and troubled with the queerest illusions, was equal to stating a complicated legal abomination in terms of clearness and precision that few accomplished men of business could surpass. Such are the strange pranks that Mother Nature plays with her darling children of genius. What a comfort it is, after all, to be commonplace! We sit in our highly respectable armchairs and enjoy

in peaceful bliss all that Shelley wrought in pain and tears; we calmly pronounce judgment on his tempestuous life, and are duly shocked at his domestic fiascoes—we who cannot conceive the troublous workings of souls that suffer that we may be blest.

Shelley is not the only poet connected with Cooper's Hill. Perhaps on dark wintry nights the chilly ghost of old Sir John Denham prowls about here, arguing with the spirit of the hill as to whether the hill made the fame of the old courtier or whether he made the fame of the hill. 'Tis a knotty point, well fitted for a ghostly argument. No conscientious student of English poetry fails to read Denham's "Cooper's Hill," for did not both John Dryden and Pope give it high praise. Most readers of the poem will feel that poets must have been kinder to each other in those days than they are now; one shudders at the thought of the critical lashes Sir John would have writhed under had he been a modern minor poet. As it is, the poem commands respect on account of its age; no one would be so disrespectful as to throw his critical pebble at a fine old crusted literary monument that

has existed in collections of British poets for nearly two centuries. As all gentle cyclists ride with a book in their pocket, be sure you take your Denham when you go to Cooper's Hill; it is probably the only place in the world where you will be able to read the poem from beginning to end, not that it is unworthy, but modern readers are accustomed to much stronger poetical draughts. They will have little patience with the old poet's quaint rhapsodies over his dearly beloved Thames—

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

You feel on reading some of Denham's lines very much as the boy Oliver Wendell Holmes felt when he looked out upon the withered old gentleman tottering down Boston Street—

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

The London coroners, who are so justly indignant at a prevalent cause of infant mortality in poor neighbourhoods, may derive some consolation from the knowledge that such things were probably common even in Denham's day, or he would not have written, still harping on the Thames—

> His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,
> Search not his bottom, but survey his shore;
> O'er which he kindly spreads his spacious wing,
> And hatches plenty for th' ensuing spring.
> Nor then destroys it with too fond a stay,
> Like mothers which their infants overlay.

Reluctantly I left the hill-brow, for the panorama of meadow and woodland was at its best, as such views always are in the bright intervals of showery weather. It would have been possible to descend to the river, and ferry across in the direction of Wraysbury, but, as the day was yet young and the roads were in good condition, I decided to ride through Egham to Staines, and from thence to Wraysbury and Horton. It was along this identical road to Egham that Shelley, according to his own story, walked with a mysterious visitor

from Wales who had come to inform the poet that his father and his uncle were plotting to entrap him and lock him up. The incident is interesting from the fact that Shelley's friend Peacock always declared that it had never taken place; that it was one of many illusions that Shelley laboured under from time to time. At Egham you get on to the favourite cycling road that runs in almost a straight line from Staines to Yorktown and on to Hampshire. Having descended Egham hill in safety I pedalled on to Staines Bridge, pausing there a few minutes to watch the boats, canoes and dongolas, with their freights of daintily-clad girls and muscular young men. The inevitable stout elderly Frenchman and his wife were on the bridge studying Baedeker, and doing battle with a map spread out upon the parapet.

The road from Staines through Wraysbury, with its paper-mill, on to Horton is good riding all the way. The meadow land on either side, plentifully sprinkled with cattle, gives one an almost continuous series of pretty pictures—that is, if you are not deluded by the foolish notion that a flat country must be dull and uninteresting. Heavy thunderclouds were

hanging ominously over Drayton, but overhead the sun was shining down fiercely. The enjoyment of the ride along the level roads was considerably discounted by a plague of those black little flies that are such a torment to the poor wheelman's eyes. They creep in at the corner in the most insiduous manner. You feel a sudden pricking, as of a microscopic stiletto being driven into your eye; you try to wipe the little demon out with your handkerchief, and only succeed in increasing the pain; then you resolve to bear the torture heroically, until the tears called up by the closed eyelid wash the unwelcome visitor out. While you are carrying on this experiment another fiend coolly crawls into your other eye, and, presto! you are riding along a country road with both eyes forcibly closed up, and scalding tears flowing down your cheeks. You scramble off the machine as swiftly and as gracefully as you can, and thank your lucky stars that no obstacle, animate or inanimate, happened to be in the way at the critical moment. This is one of the reasons why certain cyclists appear in public with their eyes protected by goggles of a blood-curdling aspect.

On entering the little village of Horton you will notice at once the flower-decked Five Bells Inn, nearly opposite to which, at the corner of a lane, is a board with the legend "G. Barker, Iron and Brass Foundry." While you are wondering what on earth an iron and brass foundry can find to do in this out-of-the-way spot, you will discover that on one side of the lane there is a shallow moat, and behind the moat is a small estate containing a modern red-brick mansion. This moat once surrounded an old country house to which the father of John Milton retired after he had given up his business in Bread Street. To this quiet corner of the world came the young fair-haired student, straight from Cambridge, to live and study and dream among these orchards, woods and meadows. For five or six years he must have been a familiar figure on this white stretch of Buckinghamshire road—that apparently most hopeless of characters, a young man resolutely determined to become a famous poet. How the scrivener father must have chafed to see his son content to wander about this country-side and pore over books! Little could he have imagined the mighty projects

that were being planned, the self-preparation that was so systematically being carried on by the seemingly listless and idle young man. But John Milton, with a rare steadfastness of purpose, was quietly laying the foundation of a monumental work that was never to perish. With the glorious self-confidence of youth he wrote to one of his friends—the messenger must have carried the letter along this very lane—"You make many inquiries as to what I am about, what am I thinking of? Why, with God's help, of immortality! Forgive the word, I only whisper it in your ear! Yes, I am pluming my wings for flight." But when these words were penned something more than a pluming of the wings had already taken place, for in the quiet serenity of this village of Horton the young man who dreamed of immortal fame had already achieved it. If *Paradise Lost* had never been written, humanity would still have treasured with infinite gratitude the undying music of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and the stately sadness of "Lycidas."

Do many people find time to read these poems now, I wondered, as I sat on the wooden seat outside the Five Bells; or is the news-

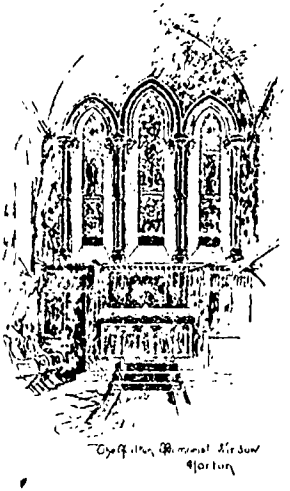
paper absorbing all the reading powers of the average citizen? Unfortunately we are generally introduced to Milton by means of *Paradise Lost*, which to the half-trained youthful mind is anything but entertaining reading. I thought of the dear good soul who, before I had completed my twelfth year, handed me *Paradise Lost* in the smallest possible print, impressing upon me the duty of reading it without any skipping. How many men and women have in this way had all the compensations and delights of the truly great writers shut out of their lives for ever! He who would rise step by step into that upper chamber where the greatest thoughts wedded to the sweetest music are to be heard, let him commence with the delightful tripping measures that young John Milton penned in the old house that once peeped through yonder elms and poplars.

One good thing about ambling on a cycle is that it brings you into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. You are a knight of the road; the storms sometimes send you flying for shelter into a barn or into a roadside inn, when you have a chance of chatting with

the farm hands or hob-nobbing with the bailiff or the farmer himself, picking up the queerest wrinkles concerning country thoughts and ways. As I sat on the bench outside the Five Bells there came through the open window the sounds of a warm dissertation, delivered by a sturdy-looking, red-faced, gray-whiskered farmer. The subject was "out-o'-works," and the difficulty in obtaining extra hands at harvest time. The concluding sentence was given in quavering, passionate tones: "They ain't no good for nothin'; they comes beggin' and a snivellin' for work, and when you offers it 'em, they wants tuppence to start with, and when you're fool enough to give it 'em, you never sees them no more!" What a problem for pulpits and platforms and the "all-men-are-equal" people! I don't wonder at it. I have tried working on the land, with a spade and hoe in a small back garden, and it makes your back ache dreadfully. Depend upon it, tramping from workhouse to workhouse, making tea in an old saucepan over a few crackling sticks, in a roadside dingle, is far more pleasant.

Leaving my cycle at the inn I strolled to the village church of St. Michael, with its flint

walls and square red-brick tower half covered with ivy. Passing under the fine old Norman arch at the end of the porch I found the pretty little church in the possession of the swifts and swallows. They darted from belfry to pew and from pew to pulpit. One impudent fellow was even scuffling among the flowers on the altar just beneath the stained-glass window in which Milton is represented in the act of writing. I wonder who placed the beautifully painted panels on the altar, whose cunning hand limned these wise men from the East adoring the infant Saviour, and the heavenly-looking saints and angels on the panels below. It is worth pedalling many miles to see so worthy a piece of work adorning a quiet village church. Is there a rich man who loves Horton for Milton's sake? It was in this place that Milton, in his twenty-ninth year, stood a sorrowing son at



the graveside of that "woman of incomparable virtue and goodness," his mother. I could dimly conjure up that pathetic scene as I sat down in one of the pews and gazed upon the dark-coloured flat stone with its simple inscription :—"Heare lyeth the body of Sara Milton, the wife of John Milton, who died the 3rd of April, 1637." The good mother, when she prayed within these walls, little thought that a day would come when the sunbeams would stream down upon her grave through a window of coloured glasses erected to the memory of her dear son. Probably, like most mothers, she was more anxious that her son should continue to love his mother than that the world should resound with his name.

The sun was shining brilliantly when I passed out of the church into the churchyard. The rose-trees among the graves were in full bloom, dispelling all sense of sadness from the place, in spite of the numerous ugly iron crosses that seem here to have taken the place of the old-fashioned wooden memorials of the dead. Is this the result of there being an iron-foundry in the village? If so, may all village iron-foundries be swept away by cyclones or

swallowed up in earthquakings! Horton is one of those precious links that bring us into closer touch with the great dead, as no one will fail to realise who puts his Milton in his wallet and reads "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" among the meadows, lanes, and orchards that inspired the writer of the two most melodious lyrics in the English language. After a turn round the village green, I steered for Staines, and thence along an uninteresting and rough road into Chertsey. For the hundredth time I marvelled at the toughness of rubber tyres. "Pop-pop-pop," and even "bang-bang-bang" went the two wheels, with no light weight on the top of them, over flints of the most fiendish character, but no puncture stopped my career. The Chertsey shop windows seemed to be filled with prizes that were to be distributed to successful scullers and punters. What a marvellous appetite these young aquatic athletes seem to have for silver-plated cruet-stands, tea-pots, dressing-cases, and copper kettles! And the winners at the Olympian games were content with a crown of wild olive! I notice too, in reading the placards in the riverside towns and villages, that our young men and even young

ladies perform prodigies of skill and endurance and are willing to accept even five shillings as a reward. I suppose it is because the national instinct is so decidedly commercial.

Turning sharply to the right, down a road opposite to the Chertsey parish church, I pedalled along over the bumpy surface, picking my way among pedestrians, perambulators, lumbering flies and tradesmen's carts, peering about anxiously for the old house where Abraham Cowley spent the last years of his life. I found it on the right-hand side of the road, an old-fashioned gabled front with latticed windows and a red-tiled roof. The road here is

none too wide, and one can readily understand, without being a Philistine or a Vandal, that it was necessary to remove the porch which once projected ten feet into the street. It is comforting to see how carefully the old house has been preserved by those who have built the much larger structure with which it is now incorporated. There is a tablet, too, on the wall announcing that it was here that "the last accents flowed from Cowley's tongue." The poet was luckier than most bards, to obtain from Charles II. what in that day must have been a most eligible little mansion to live in, and the adjoining lands for income. This was his reward for being ejected from Trinity College, Cambridge, by the Puritans and afterwards performing many services for the king. Most of us made the acquaintance of Cowley in our schooldays through his paraphrase of Horace's story of the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse, which was a familiar item—fittingly abridged, of course—in children's books in the sixties; it was recited at birthday parties by perky infant prodigies; and now, if you are an old boy or an old girl, dig it out of your bookcase, and you will be surprised to find how

keenly you will enjoy the almost forgotten quaint, simple, and smoothly flowing lines. Cowley inherited much of the melodious simplicity of the Elizabethan poets; indeed it is a sweet relief to turn from the murky, obscure, and labyrinthine efforts of some of our latter-day minstrels to this quiet, plain-spoken old poet. It is good to think that in this old house, with its garden, and close proximity to the river, Cowley found his ideal of happiness, for he was a philosopher as well as a poet, or he would not have written :—

This only grant me, that my means may lie
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.
Some honour I would have,
Not from great deeds, but good alone ;
Th' unknown are better than ill-known ;
Rumour can ope' the grave !
Acquaintance I would have, but when 't depends
Not from the number, but the choice of friends.

Books should, not business, entertain the light,
And sleep, as undisturbed as death, the night.
My house a cottage more
Than palace ; and should fitting be
For all my use, no luxury.
My garden painted o'er

With Nature's hand, not Art's, that pleasures yield
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.

Thus would I double my life's fading space,
For he that runs it well twice runs his race.
And in this true delight
These unbought sports and happy state,
I would not fear, nor wish, my fate :
But boldly say each night,
To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them ; I have lived to-day.

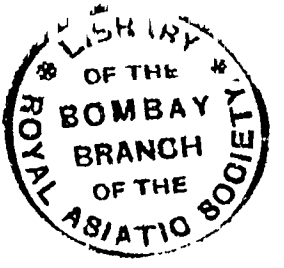
Like Milton, Cowley expressed his dissatisfaction with the educational methods of his time by putting forth a grand new system of education. Milton's tract on education is read by all who dip into his prose writings, but probably few living men have any knowledge of Cowley's "Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy." If, however, you want a quiet hour in the arm-chair, after a day's ride, read the old poet's quaint description of the model college and system of education which he conjured up in his mind's eye. It is strange that an essay so far in advance of the age in which it was written, and containing many sound ideas that have not been realised until

the present day, should have been almost forgotten. Among his suggestions is one, that the college should contain "a gallery to walk in, adorned with the pictures or statues of all the inventors of anything useful to human life; as printing, guns, America (sic), etc., and of late in anatomy, the circulation of the blood, the milky veins, and such like discoveries in any art, with short elogies under the portraitures: as likewise the figures of all sorts of creatures. A garden containing all sorts of plants that our soil will bear, and a second garden, destined only to the trial of all manner of experiments concerning plants," and so on. So Cowley was something more than a mere courtier poet.

I could not leave Chertsey without paying a visit to the Golden Grove and St. Anne's Hill, where Cowley, when he took up his residence in Guildford Street, hoped that he would have "a merry time" with his friend Dean Sprat. Turning to the right, over the railway bridge, a few minutes' ride brought me to the Grove, with its little inn and the wonderful old oak tree, with the benches and table up among its branches, where with the tea-cups laid on a snowy white cloth, and good homely bread and

butter, you find that being "up a tree" is not such a bad thing after all. Leaving my bicycle at the inn I walked up the shady lanes to the summit, and there watched the clouds and the sunlight working constantly changing effects of light and shadow over the typical English landscape spread out beneath my feet and reaching as far as eye could see.

As I rode home along the Chertsey road, just catching a glimpse of Anningsley, the scene of Thomas Day's self-sacrificing experiments, I felt that my ride of about forty miles had brought me somewhat nearer to a due appreciation of the men whose haunts I had visited.



V

JANE AUSTEN AND GILBERT WHITE

IT had come at last! For five dreary weeks the roads had been alternately quagmire and stiff paste. Every now and then it had looked as if the paste were about to freeze into something fit for wheels to spin upon; but just as hope ran high down would come a drizzling gray curtain, and King Slosh again ruled the road. But on this March morning patience was to be rewarded and the Clerk of the Weather forgiven. For full forty hours a cold north-easter had been lashing the roads until they were as clean, dry, and polished as the bones left by a hungry dog. The keen, biting wind was still swaying the bare tree-tops, it was true, but the slanting Jacob's ladders of

sunlight, as they struggled fitfully through the iron-gray clouds, were a joy indeed after so many weeks of sunless days.

It is one of the redeeming features of the much-abused British climate that it teaches you, by stern lessons in adversity, to enjoy and thoroughly appreciate a fine day. Think of the many unfortunate countries where they have a climate, but no weather; while here we have all weather and no climate to speak of. Is it not something to be grateful for that nearly half a column of the morning paper is taken up with harmless observations and forecasts of a meteorological character? Who knows what mischief, stupidity, or gruesome horrors these half columns would contain were it not for this merciful interposition of the weather recorders and prophets.

It is a strangely invigorating sensation that first few minutes at the pedals after not having been on the saddle for many weeks. The possibility of a ride had come about so suddenly and unexpectedly that there was no time to arrange for a destination, so I merely ambled along, without definite aim or purpose, the roads being in such splendid condition that

it mattered little whither one went. Scarcely realising the fact, I found myself at last spinning down a somewhat steep incline along the side of an old familiar Surrey common, about twenty-five miles from Charing Cross. The cold wind had been biting my larboard ear rather vigorously, and, not having been awheel for so long a time, I found myself in need of a rest. This heather-clad common contained, I knew, not far from the road, a shallow basin-like hollow, with a screen of gorse-bushes on its eastern side. Yes, there was the gorse, no longer a mass of golden beauty as when I rested here last summer, but a sullen, prickly monster to be kept at a safe distance from knickerbockered legs. Although his beauty had gone his sheltering qualities remained, and in the hollow at his feet I felt that congenial warmth which comes immediately one is freed from the nipping attentions of a nor'-easter.

Sitting down upon the black wintry heather, I drew forth the neat little volume of Cowley's essays, which my dear old friend the Librarian had sent me by the post of the evening before. It was a kindly act, only to be compared with that of the non-smoker who carries matches in

case a smoking friend should be matchless. For the Librarian, although he does not cycle, sent me this little book because he thought it would go easily into the pocket of my cycling jacket. What more pleasant and fitting place could there be than this for reading the quiet, gentle phrases of Cowley? To the westward two columns of pale blue smoke from the wood fires of two cottages on the edge of the common curled upward and did battle with the remorseless north-easterly wind. Probably two housewives were struggling with smoky fireplaces to preserve their dinners from ruin. For quite two minutes the sun burst through quite a wide gap in the dull gray clouds. It was enough. Instantly the joyous notes of an upward-soaring skylark broke the silence of the morning, and from behind the hedge of the field across the road there floated the loud song of a blackbird.

I opened the book and found that I had hit upon Cowley's essay "Of Solitude." How delightfully it read in that pleasant spot! I chuckled aloud when I came to that quotation from Monsieur de Montaigne: "Ambition itself might teach us to love solitude: there is nothing does so much hate to have com-

panions." Dost see the profound truth in this, my masters, ye of the senate, the platform, the court-house, the mart, the exchange, and of the whirlpool called Society? "It is very fantastical and contradictory in human nature, that men should love themselves above all the rest of the world, and yet never endure to be with themselves." "If once we be thoroughly engaged in the love of letters, instead of being wearied with the length of any day, we shall only complain of the shortness of our whole life." What book-lover has not realised this. On the very next page I came across a remarkable sentence, marking vividly the extraordinary change in public opinion respecting the functions and needs of the working classes that has taken place since the good Cowley's day. Speaking of the little intervals of accidental solitude which occur in all conditions of life he, in a parenthesis, makes this reservation ("except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the necessary provisions of life"). How many men of Cowley's standing would in these days look complacently upon the lot of even "the meanest of the people" being one of unintermitting toil?

But it was at the end of the essay that I found the pretty thought, expressed in quaint verse, that led to my finding an objective for my day's run :—

Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good !
Hail, ye plebeian underwood !
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

I know not how it was, but the lines called to my mind that gentle lover of nature and patient observer of bird life, dear old Gilbert White of Selborne. If the shades of Cowley and White have met, what boon companions they must have become. Cowley in the seventeenth and White in the eighteenth century were representatives of that order of men who, while their fellows are struggling in a wild scrimmage for wealth, place, and power, are content to lead a life of gentle quietude in communion with nature. Both perhaps realised their highest dream of happiness when strolling within the narrow confines of their own gardens. There were only thirty miles of open road between my shelter under the

gorse bushes and beautiful Selborne. The temptation was irresistible, notwithstanding the icy wind and the threatening layers of cold-gray cloud. Besides, within a mile of the Selborne road was Chawton, a village I had never seen, for I had only learned since my last visit to Selborne that at Chawton there is still standing the old house in which Jane Austen lived for many years, and in which she wrote nearly all the tales that are so dear to every book-lover.

I placed Cowley with proper reverence in an inner pocket and was soon on the road again, only to find myself the next minute face to face with a company of cows who had just left the milking-shed. They viewed me with fishy near-sighted eyes, and lowered their heads with a foolish assumption of ferocity; but it was all over in a second or two, and off they scampered on either side of the road. Once over the pretty white bridge crossing the streamlet you enter a lane lined with elms, on the warmest of summer days a cool retreat, but this morning there is no sign of even a bud upon their bare branches, and I catch a glimpse of a shaggy little sparrow, clinging

bravely to one of the trunks and pecking tenaciously in the hope of finding a morsel of food in the nearly frozen bark. It is a tough pull up the hill and past the malting-houses, and a quarter of a mile farther on, just where one would least expect to find it, is a little red gate at the side of the road, bearing the legend "Museum Entrance." Yes, it is quite true, in this out-of-the-world spot, on the edge of Bullwater Common, is a veritable museum open to any man who chooses to enter. It is the home of Mr. Selous, the famous hunter of big game and a naturalist to boot. Here you shall find such a collection of heads of lions, buffalo, and tigers as shall haunt you in your dreams for months; but the gentle cyclist will probably find more to interest him in the collections of birds' nests and eggs and insects, some of which were captured by the great hunter when he was a happy schoolboy. Excellent Mr. Selous, to share his trophies of the chase, and those milder trophies of field and hedgerow with his fellow-men. May his red gate, with its inviting inscription, open to many an English boy who shall hereafter become a student of nature's secrets!

Slightly bending leftward, the road skirts the edge of the common, and round by the side of the "Royal Oak" inn you enter upon a long length of ascending road leading to Ash and Aldershot. At first the road passes through thick plantations of fir and pine, and when the end of these is reached the open country, wild and unpopulated, is seen on either side. On the left the Hog's Back stands out sharply against the sky, to the right is a far-reaching series of dark-brown kopjes, rising one above the other, the sky-line bristling with fir-trees. Here at Eastertide you will hear the continuous crackling of rifles, and the hillsides are flecked with regiments of volunteers engaged in mimic warfare. As you ride along, glancing over this stretch of undulating land, you may gather some faint idea of the difficulties of scouting. How, O civilian critic, would you find out what is on the other side of the distant row of hills without being sniped by the enemy? It makes one flinch to think of having to creep across these rolling hillocks, from cover to cover, with the off-chance of being potted at any moment by a rifleman safely sheltered behind the distant hill-top.

It is a hilly road to Ash, with some sharp down-runs, but at the village church you can rest for awhile and take in the view of Aldershot, which lies within easy distance. Not far from Ash Church, with its many-gabled roofs, there is a finger-post on the left, pointing to the town of Farnham. On this particular morning the first half-mile of the road is torn up by sewage operations, and the next half-mile is a river of huge freshly-put-down flints, with not even the usual four inches of "smooth" which honest road-menders leave for toiling wheelmen. Within sight of Farnham the country becomes much prettier, and the road is all that the most exacting cyclist could desire. At this time of year, however, the hop-gardens present a most desolate appearance; the bare poles are connected by long lines of string, from which flutter untidy fragments left from last autumn's hop-picking.

The eight miles from Farnham to Alton is delightful running on a good hard road, smooth as a billiard table, with gentle rises and descents. Just past the ugly yellow board directing to Foochow Lodge is a stone marking the boundary between Surrey and Hampshire.

The roofs of Bentley village look pretty in the distance, but a closer inspection reveals numerous monstrosities in corrugated iron that make one sigh for the old red-tiled roofs and the cosy thatch. The hedges are lined with unsightly posters proclaiming the sale of the furniture of a fine old residence overlooking a lovely stretch of well-timbered country. What turn of Fortune's wheel has forced the occupiers of this pleasant home to seek "fresh woods and pastures new"? With what a pang of regret must they have turned to take their farewell glance at the familiar meadowland stretching out to the distant hill; how they will miss the loquacious purple rooks now busily building their nests in the bare branches of the giant elms.

From Bentley, through Froyle and Holybourne, the road is a series of gently rising and falling hills, with a steep descent into the town of Alton, famous for nothing but its ale, but of interest to the bookman, because Jane Austen must, many a time, have walked over here from Chawton to do her "shopping." The shops are now of a much more pretentious character than they could have been in her day.

The railway has brought London fashions within easy distance, and the old oil lanterns have given place to modern incandescent gas-burners. In an interesting chapter of his memoir of Jane Austen, Mr. Austen Leigh gives a list of the social changes that have come about since the girlhood of his famous aunt. Even in well-to-do families the cooking was never left entirely to servants, the lady of the house would be proud of her achievements in the kitchen. Families appear to have had certain specialities upon which they prided themselves. One house would be famous for its ham, another for its game-pie, and a third for its furmity, or tansy pudding. Know, O ignorant, up-to-date reader, that furmity, sometimes called frumenty, was a sort of porridge made of wheat boiled in milk and flavoured with milk and cinnamon. Tansy was a much more ambitious dish, composed of eggs, sugar, wine, and cream, and fried in butter. Think of that, ye modern dyspeptics, and marvel at the stomachs of your forefathers. It was evidently a popular dish a hundred years before, for you will perhaps remember that old Pepys, who was no mean trencherman, was

careful to include it in the dinner which he gave on the 26th of March, 1661, to celebrate the fourth anniversary of his recovery from that operation which he vowed to give thanks for every year, but which he afterwards seems to have forgotten. "I had a pretty dinner for them," says he, "viz. a brace of stewed carps, six roasted chickens, and a jowl of salmon, hot, for the first course; a *tansy* and two neats' tongues, and cheese, the second." Potatoes were not nearly so common as they are now, for when Jane Austen's mother advised the wife of one of her tenants to plant potatoes, the good woman replied, "No, no; they're all very well for you gentry, but they must be terribly costly to rear."

Mr. Leigh declares that in one of the books of his childhood, a little girl, the daughter of a gentleman, was taught by her mother to make her own bed before leaving her chamber. It was no uncommon thing when Jane Austen was a little girl for mistresses to concoct home-made wines, to distil herbs for domestic medicines, and even to spin the thread of which the household linen was woven. Mr. Leigh says that when he was a youth gentlemen did

much more for themselves than they do now. They brushed their own clothes at the end of the day, they cleaned their own guns, they turned out after dinner on the evening of a hunting day, and, lanthorn in hand, visited the stable to see that the horses had been well cared for. The little girl, Jane Austen, walking along the miry Hampshire roads on her iron pattens would see in almost every cottage a woman sitting at her spinning-wheel, spinning flax or wool. But we have altered all that, and the farm-labourer's wife purchases her petticoats ready-made, at the local *bon marché*, and studies the hideous fashion pictures in the halfpenny newspaper.

There was nothing to pause for in Alton town, so on I went, under the railway bridge, past the road leading to Selborne, and within a mile and a half found myself at Chawton Post-office. Just beyond the post-office, opposite to the "Grey Friar" inn, and at the corner of the road where it branches off to Winchester, is a good-sized square red-brick house, the front wall of which is not more than three feet from the road, and protected only by a rough, low wooden fence. Time has taken most of the colour out

of the red bricks, but the tiles of the roof shone warmly in the sun which had begun to assert itself at Alton, and was now completely victorious. Two women came out from the fine old

Jane Austen's House
Chawton

thatched cottage opposite to see the sight that, after five sunless weeks, was a gladsome one indeed. As I stood on the triangular piece of turf, at the foot of the finger-post at the cross roads, gazing up at the old weather-worn red-

brick house Chawton became somewhat excited, so uneventful a spot of earth is it. The women at the thatched cottage fetched other women, the landlord of the "Grey Friar" came to his door, the postman paused on his round, five little Hampshire boys left their marbles, and stood, a wondering row of ruddy faces with wide-open mouths and mischievous eyes, staring up at the Cockney lunatic. I have always a never-failing remedy for such trying situations. I produced a pipe and tobacco-pouch, filled up, lighted, and puffed swirling clouds of smoke, which were driven swiftly down the Winchester road. It was sufficient. The populace retired, satisfied that a man who smokes a common-place briar pipe is sane, and not likely to do anything of a startling character, he is to be trusted. It is the strange beings who do not smoke, who wear blue spectacles, who stride into the village inns, and shriek out for a lunch of porridge, brown bread, nuts and milk—these are the visitors concerning whom the villager always has his doubts; he likes to follow them to the end of the village street, and is not quite comfortable until he has, as it were, seen them off the premises.

The old house is now divided into tenements, the latticed windows have been replaced by modern sashes, but the fine old fir-trees on the other side of the garden wall must have been familiar friends to Jane Austen, and the whole aspect of the village cannot have altered much since she first entered the old house. From her window, as she sat writing, she would see these same thatched cottages, the gently rising wood-crowned hill opposite, with its slopes covered with brilliant green grass, the row of fine old lime-trees facing the front door, and the picturesque "Grey Friar" inn with its swinging sign-board. The present sign-board is a modern one, evidently painted by a master hand. It represents a genial gray friar in cloak and hood, holding in his hand a huge white lily, with the excellent motto, "Be temperate in all things." Is Boniface slyly rebuking the

The Grey Friars Inn
Chawton

sometimes intemperate advocates of a "water only" policy?

To this house, in this quiet Hampshire village, Jane Austen came when she was thirty-four years of age, and here she lived a peaceful and happy domestic life among the members of her family, writing at odd half-hours when she could be spared from social and domestic duties the stories that have won for her a place among the immortals. It was characteristic of her that she never posed as an author; she never had a separate room of her own to write in, but always worked at a corner of the table in the general sitting-room with the other members of the family around her. If any one called, or music or games were proposed, her manuscript was quietly placed under the blotting-pad and she joined in the social circle. It seems almost incredible that such books as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* could have been written under such conditions. What a lesson to the faddy writers of to-day, who, so interviewers assure us, require typewriters, phonographs, and "atmosphere" before they can produce a line. *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Northanger Abbey* were

written when she was a young woman of one- or two-and-twenty, but they were not published until she had revised and partly re-written them in this house at Chawton. *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion* were all written here. How Jane Austen, living her quiet uneventful life in this place, was able to give such reality and life to her creations, is one of the mysteries of genius which men have tried in vain to solve. As she played at cup-and-ball in yonder garden to the delight of her tiny nephews and nieces, or sang her simple songs in the old-fashioned drawing-room, she could little have imagined that a hundred years later her books would be a thousandfold more popular than they were in her own day, or that *Pride and Prejudice* would become an English classic.

Out from the little green doorway so close to the roadside, one rainy Saturday morning in the spring of 1817, came a sad group. Jane Austen, pale and weak from long suffering, was assisted into a carriage by her loving sister, whom she described as "my dearest sister, my tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse." The carriage was driven slowly round the corner into the Winchester road, the good Uncle

Henry on horseback riding at the side. Save for a few tender letters to her relatives the magic pen was never to be used again. Two months later Jane Austen died within the shadow of Winchester Cathedral, where she lies buried near the centre of the north aisle, almost opposite to the tomb of William of Wykeham.

As I rode back to Chawton Post-office, whence I had to turn off in order to reach the road to Selborne, I met an aged woman, tottering under a bundle of sticks, who as a girl may have seen Jane Austen and received many acts of kindness at her gentle hands. I was eager to question her, but she suddenly disappeared within a cottage, and the chance was gone. Down the road, which the finger-post proclaimed led to Selborne and Petersfield, I pedalled in high spirits, for the depressing gray clouds had now disappeared and the sun was shining brilliantly in a clear blue sky. The cold wind had dropped, and for the first time since the preceding autumn I felt the sun's warm rays. The road was in excellent condition, and there was nothing to do but to pedal on merrily and enjoy the lovely views of hill and dale on either side. Within

an hour I caught sight of the familiar gray square tower of Selborne church, surrounded by columns of blue smoke from half-a-dozen chimneys, peeping through the bare branches of the trees, and then I had to ride cautiously down the steep hill into the village. The sparrows were flying in buzzing masses from field to field, and from behind the hedge on my right hand there came the pleasant sound of a tinkling sheep-bell. Behind the village, like a great brown wall reaching up to the sky, frowned the Hanger, so familiar to all readers of Gilbert White. One spot of bright green there was near the summit, where the timber had been thinned out and the sun had broken through, lighting up a few square yards of grassland; it shone like an emerald in a setting of dark metal.

> See Selborne spreads her boldest beauties round
> The varied valley, and the mountain ground,
> Wildly majestic! What is all the pride
> Of flats, with loads of ornament supplied!
> Unpleasing, tasteless, impotent expense,
> Compared with Nature's rude magnificence.

I venture to say that few strangers, much as

their expectations may have been raised beforehand, are disappointed with Selborne; it is one of the few places which realise the anticipation. The entrance to the village from the Alton road is charming, especially in the summer-time, when the trees on either side meet overhead, and you approach the enchanted land of which you have read so often by your fireside on cold wintry nights, over the rippling stream, with all the glamour of the dear old book undispelled. Quite suddenly you find yourself standing by the Plestor, in the centre of Gilbert White's little world.

Almost opposite to the church, but a few steps farther along the road, is a red-brick gabled house, with red-tiled roofs and rough-cast front, a small wooden porch protecting the entrance door. This is the house wherein lived and died Gilbert White, and wherein was written the little book that will never die. The small square building beyond the house is the old brew-house, a relic of the days when even curates brewed their own beer. It must not be forgotten that this side of the house, facing the village street, is really the back; the front of the house can only be seen by climbing the Hanger.

In this identical month of March, one hundred and twenty-two years ago, a post-chaise came rattling along this road, and drew up at the entrance-door of "The Wakes," for by that name the house was then called, as it is to this day. A journey of the utmost importance had been accomplished, fortunately with complete success. Out of the post-chaise came two personages who were never to really die. One was an elderly gentleman about five feet three inches in height, with a clerical wig, surmounted by a three-cornered hat. As he stepped forth and his travelling cloak fell back, you could see that he wore knee-breeches with buckles, and buckled shoes. This was none other than the Rev. Gilbert White. He was in a state of considerable perturbation as to the condition of his fellow-traveller with whom he had journeyed eighty miles in post-chaises. He carried him into the house in a box under his arm, for the said fellow-traveller was no less important a personage than the immortal Timothy—that Timothy, whose conduct and habits of life had been under close observation for thirty years; Timothy, whose appetite failed him for six weeks in the winter, but who

feasted voraciously on sow-thistles, dandelions, and lettuces all through the summer; Timothy, who displayed such dexterity in scraping out the ground with his forefeet and throwing it up over his back with his hind; Timothy,

who showed as much solicitude about rain as a lady dressed in all her best attire, who shuffled away on the first sprinklings, running his head in a corner; Timothy, who was put in a tub of water to see whether he would sink or float, but who afterwards had his

revenge "amidst the umbrageous forests of the asparagus beds." Was ever tortoise before or since the object of such world-wide interest as Timothy? He suffered in nowise from his eighty miles' journey, and lived happily for fourteen years afterwards in the garden of The Wakes, surviving his fellow-traveller by twelve months.

Leaving my bicycle at the "Selborne Arms," I walked past the row of cottages beyond White's house, and turning sharply to the right, crossed over the fields to the foot of the Hanger, described in the first letter to Thomas Pennant as "a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village; and is divided into a sheep down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood called *The Hanger*." The ascent would be a tough task were it not for the curious zigzag path which turns twenty-eight times between the base and the summit. Like every other village in England, Selborne had its Victorian Jubilee festivities, and with the surplus of the cash raised at that time the zigzag has been repaired; but it is still a slippery and exhausting pathway. Up you stagger among the covert of beeches which Gilbert White

declared to be "the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs."

The summit having been described in *the* book, there is no occasion for any one else to undertake the task. "The down, or sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plain, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, woodlands, heath, and water. The prospect is bounded to the south-east and east by the vast range of mountains called the Sussex Downs, by Guild-down near Guildford, and by the Downs round Dorking, and Ryegate in Surrey, to the north-east; which, altogether, with the country beyond Alton and Farnham, form a noble and extensive outline."

There is one view from the summit of the Hanger which Gilbert White did not consider of sufficient importance to mention in the above description, but it is the one view which all good pilgrims will eagerly seek. In his character of poet, however, White does call attention to it—

Now climb the steep, drop now your eye below,
Where round the blooming village orchards grow;
There, like a picture, lies my lowly seat,
A rural, shelter'd, unobserved retreat.

If you walk several hundred yards along the brow and keep your eyes well open you will discover a break in the covert through which you can look straight down into the old naturalist's garden, and obtain a complete view of the whole front of the house and the outbuildings. By comparing it with the woodcut in my copy of *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (Professor Rennie's edition of 1832) I find that several alterations have been made in the house. A wing has been added, and the turret with the bow windows, and a second story has been placed on the top of the addition which White himself built. There is the path leading to the clump of trees which once sheltered the summer-house in which he made so many of his patient and careful observations of birds and insects. There is the meadow in which he discovered the viper who had swallowed her young. I was informed by a villager, who displayed a keen interest in the subject, that much of the interior of the house

is in exactly the same condition as it was in White's time. He pointed out the windows of the rooms in which White carried on his studies and in which he died; but he afterwards admitted that there was considerable diversity of opinion as to their precise identity. White's sun-dial, he said, was still in the garden, but when I was on the top of The Hanger I did not see it.

I did not attempt to descend by the slippery zigzag path, but, with the help of a native, discovered a gently sloping path, covered several inches deep with dead beech leaves, which led to the foot of the hill. The afternoon was passing rapidly away, but I could not leave the village without revisiting the church and the churchyard. Almost opposite to White's house is the square open space which in most villages would be called "the green," but which here has always been called the "Playstow," or the "Plestor." White has himself graphically described it: "In the centre of the village, and near the church, is a piece of ground surrounded by houses and vulgarly called 'The Plestor.' In the midst of this spot stood, in old times, a vast oak with a short,

squat body, and huge horizontal arms extending almost to the extremity of the area. This venerable tree, surrounded with stone steps and seats above them, was the delight of old and young, and a place of much resort in summer evenings, where the former sat in grave debate while the latter frolicked and danced before them. Long might it have stood had not the amazing tempest in 1703 overturned it at once, to the infinite regret of the inhabitants and the vicar, who bestowed several pounds in setting it in its place again, but all his care could not avail; the tree sprouted for a time, then withered and died. This oak I mention to show to what a bulk planted oaks also may arrive."

A stone pathway leads across the Plestor to the churchyard gate, just inside of which is a famous yew-tree of remarkable proportions. My friend the villager, who accompanied me, assured me that he had recently measured the trunk and found that its girth had increased by about three feet since White measured it in 1750. Within the church there is a marble slab which states that White's grave is marked by "the fifth stone from this wall"; but for

some unaccountable reason this indicator has been placed on the wall *opposite* to that behind which the grave lies. Why this error has never been set right it is impossible to imagine; it must have tried the patience of many an earnest pilgrim seeking in vain to find the shrine on that side of the churchyard where it is not. The irregular pews, "of all dimensions and heights, being patched up according to the fancy of the owners," no longer exist. They are replaced by painfully regular modern benches; but I discovered pieces of the old pews incorporated with two new seats at the end of the centre aisle.

The Great Yew
Selborne Church
Yard.

These walls must often have resounded to the voice of White who, in his office of curate, preached many a sermon here. He seems to have been a lovable man in himself, as well as in his book, for it was said by his nephew that the old naturalist had the peculiarity of attaching to himself all of every age, but particularly the young people, who listened in delight to his instructive tales. An old woman in the village, who was eleven years old when Gilbert White died, told the late Frank Buckland that she remembered the curate as a quiet old gentleman who had many old-fashioned sayings and gave away many presents to his parishioners at Christmas. From his handwriting, and from the careful precision of his letters and diary, he was evidently a somewhat prim old bachelor of tidy and regular habits. Of this trait in his character an amusing story is told of his proctor days at Oriel. On his rounds one evening he discovered an undergraduate lying on the ground, sleeping the sleep of intoxication, with his outer garments removed and neatly folded up at his side. The Proctor awoke the bacchante and sent him to his college with an order to appear the next day for judgment.

The culprit turned up in a highly contrite frame of mind. White said to him: "You deserve an exemplary punishment; but I observed one circumstance which shows you are not wholly degraded. Your clothes were folded up by your side, indicating habits of care and neatness which appear incompatible with habitual degradation. I shall therefore say no more."

Coming out from the silent church, I passed round by the belfry tower to the right, and within a few paces came upon the six time-worn unpretentious stones which mark the resting-places of various members of the White family. The fifth stone from the wall, rising only about sixteen inches above the ground, and differing from the others only in its inscription, is the gravestone of Gilbert White. Kneeling down, one is just able to trace the letters—

G. W.

26th June,

1793.

It is best thus. No ostentatious monument should be raised above the dust of the man

whose life was one of quiet simplicity and modest piety. His monument is in the book that will for ever find a welcome in the hearts of all who love to

> Go forth under the open sky, and list
> To Nature's teachings.

VI

PARSON LOT

WE were all in a terrible state of depression, but none was more depressed than poor Dummehrlichkeit. That was the nickname we had given him years ago—some one had discovered it in Hans Breitmann—but we generally call him Dum, because we love him. We were seated in a semicircle before the fading fire at the end of the little lecture hall. All the lights had been turned out save one, for the gas-bill was a serious item in the balance-sheet of "the institute."

Dum puffed at his briar-root pipe for some minutes, and then ejaculated, "Look here, you fellows, I shall chuck it!"

There was some excuse for Dum's splenetic utterance. He himself had paid for the posters

which had announced that he would deliver a lecture specially addressed to working-men on the subject of "The Necessity for Moral as well as Material Progress." The result had been somewhat disappointing; only four people had responded to the invitation. Three of these turned out to be law-writers, known in the neighbourhood of Chancery Lane as "scribes," and they had simply dropped in for the sake of the fire, while they were waiting for copy. The fourth was the genuine article we had catered for—a house-painter. In the middle of Dum's discourse a prolonged whistle from the other side of the door, evidently a preconcerted signal, fetched the "scribes" to their feet, and they scuttled out without ceremony. The house-painter sat it out, with much sniffing, snorting, and expectorating, and after Dum's carefully prepared peroration, asked, "Is any questions allowed?" On the speaker giving his assurance that he would be delighted to answer any questions, the house-painter arose and treated us for a solid half-hour to his views on society in general and particularly upon "gents as go about preachin' to workin'-men instead o' tellin' of 'em 'ow to

keep a wife and four young 'uns on twenty-eight bob a week." We all thought the man was an empty-headed, self-conceited, ungrateful beast, but none of us had the courage to tell him so. At last he was gone, and the smell of stale beer and shag tobacco with him, but he had left his depressing influence behind him.

"Why, Dum, old man," said the Secretary, "you're surely not going to cave in because you can't make any impression on a brute-beast like that. I thought you were simply splendid to-night—a more convincing discourse I never listened to."

"What's the good of your listening to it!" responded Dum savagely. "I don't want to convince you. Fancy, a miserable audience of four—and such a four—after the hours I've spent in working that thing up. I've had enough of it—the working-man and the whole gang of capitalists, money-grubbers, greedy *bourgeoisie*, parsons, and dirty party wire-pullers must all go to the devil their own way. The Anarchists are, after all, the only people with any sense; nothing can save Humanity until we've had a regular burst-up and can start fresh."

"Do you remember Parson Lot's last letter?" I inquired of Dum, knowing his passionate admiration of Kingsley.

"No, I don't," he replied; "but if Kingsley had been here to-night even he would have had enough of it."

"I'm not so sure about that," said I; "at any rate, he had many a licking, but always came up to the scratch again. One passage in the last letter he wrote in his character of Parson Lot has always stuck to me: 'It will be no bad thing for us if we are beaten sometimes. Success at first is dangerous, and defeat an excellent medicine for testing people's honesty—for setting them earnestly to work to see what they want, and what are the best methods of attaining it.'"

"Do you know," responded Dum in a more cheerful tone, "I've often thought that a man like Kingsley would have a better chance now than he had in his day. People read his tales, but I doubt whether any one reads his political writings. I was looking the other day at some of his letters in the old *Christian Socialist*, and I don't believe there is any one alive now who can put certain truths so well as they are put there."

"Look here," said I, "let's have a Kingsley tonic. We're getting flat, stale, and unprofitable. Get up early to-morrow morning, O Dummehrlichkeit, and come with me for a ride to Eversley. The roads are good nearly all the way, the weather promises to be fine, and it will do us good to see the old church and rectory."

"A capital idea!" exclaimed the disappointed lecturer on moral and material progress.

And that's how it was that Dum and I found ourselves one gloomy April morning pedalling along the Knightsbridge-road to Hammersmith and over bumpy tram-lines to Turnham Green, and the narrow and rough road through Brentford.

"'Oh, to be in England now that April's there,'" I murmured, as the rain came pelting down at Isleworth.

"Oh, to be in Venice, out of this confounded sou'-wester," grunted Dum, wiping the rain from his face; "it's a pity Browning didn't remember this sort of thing when he began to chirp about April in England. How these organ-grinders can leave the Italian

sunshine for this cold and gloom beats me. Look at that poor little kiddy in the basket."

It was the usual Italian travelling party at the side of the road, the piano-organ with the baby on the shafts, the red-handkerchiefed woman with the deeply-lined face grinding the machine, and the grinning Southerner looking out for stray coppers.

"It's a knotty subject, my dear Dum," I replied, "involving questions of economical and imperial policy enough to turn the hair of Italian statesmen gray; but they don't appear to worry."

Mary was a housemaid,
Modest and content,

jingled the piano-organ, and the Southerner took off his greasy felt hat and politely bowed us off his pitch, evidently preferring four shillings a day in rainy England to sixpence a day in sunny Italy.

Through Hounslow and Bedfont over unusually trying macadam, we hopped, skipped, and almost jumped, until my companion declared it was as good as steeple-chasing. We were so absorbed in the effort to keep on our

machines that I quite forgot to point out to Dum the famous clipped yew-trees in front of Bedfont Church. It was a relief indeed to rest on the bridge at Staines and take a peep at the now deserted river, which a few weeks later would be crowded with boats, canoes, and steam-launches. The rain had ceased, and as we faced Egham Hill the sun could be seen peering through a thin veil of clouds.

"We shall see Eversley in sunshine after all," panted Dum, as he struggled to propel his thirteen stone of flesh up the hill. Then came the inevitable question: "Hallo! did you hear that squeak?" and he lumbered off his machine and mopped his forehead.

I never knew Dum suspect his bicycle of squeaking while on a level surface, or while gliding down a gentle declivity, but it is a remarkable fact that such a suspicion always arises on a steep incline. On these occasions my old friend invariably goes through a stereotyped performance. He dismounts, examines the centre-bracket with a most serious air, finds nothing wrong, and then, remarking that it's hardly worth while remounting before reaching the top, pushes his machine upwards.

"Dum," I exclaimed on one of these occasions, "you're a humbug!" but the tender look of reproachfulness which he turned upon me forbade my ever repeating the charge. Dum is so honourable and sincere in all things that I believe he persuades himself that the bearings really are squeaking.

The tower of Holloway's College naturally set Dum's tongue wagging as we pushed our machines up the hill. What was my opinion as to the chances of a man on the other side of "that bourne," who made his pile out of the sales of patent pills and ointment, and handed over his leavings for the higher education of women? I thought that there was insufficient evidence for the formation of a reasonable hypothesis, and said so.

"Talking of patent pills," said Dum, "do you remember the yarn the old knight told us at the common-room supper about Tom Hughes and dear old Kingsley."

I had forgotten it.

"Tom Hughes and Kingsley," continued Dum, "went home to their rooms one night after a terrible disappointment. A co-operative society which they had started, and which they

hoped was going to solve the social problem, had suddenly collapsed, and the secretary had bolted with the ready. Hughes sank into a chair in an awful state of despondency. Kingsley stood on the hearthrug, with his back to the fire, looking very blue. After a few puffs from his pipe, Kingsley said, 'Tom, old man, there's more the matter with the innards of this old world than your patent pill and mine can cure.' What ho!" broke off Dum, "we're on the level!"

There was no question of a squeaking bearing as we sprang into our saddles, and a few minutes later we were spinning down the hill, on a perfect surface, to the "Wheatsheaf Hotel" at Virginia Water. The glorious run down gave us sufficient impetus to climb the opposite hill, which had appeared to be an impossible task. Two miles farther along this delightful road and we were crossing the railway lines at Sunningdale, another three and a half and we were over the bridge and passing under the clock of the Bagshot Institute, which was pointing to eleven o'clock—twenty-six and a quarter miles from Hyde Park Corner.

"Are you good for the hill, Dum?" I called out.

"Right away, my boy," he cried, bending his back to it. "I can do anything on a road like this."

Where was now Dum's despondency of the preceding night? It was a goodly sight to see his shining happy face as he vigorously pounded up the incline, but before he reached the "Hero of Inkerman" he heard a squeaking, and was off, like Falstaff struggling out of the buck-basket.

While the usual formal examination of the centre-bracket was proceeding, there came up the hill a countryman seated on the bare broad back of a great shire-horse. He stopped at our side, and, with a preliminary "Mornin', gen'-men," poured forth a story which, in brief, was as follows:—Two days before his master had sold the shire-horse at Guildford Market, handed him the address of the purchaser, and told him to take the horse there. A mile or two out of Guildford he had suddenly forgotten the name of the place to which he was going, and on searching his pockets for the written address could not find it. He explained his

difficulty to the first man he met, and told him he seemed to remember the name of the place commenced with a C. The man suggested Cobham, and accordingly the knight of the shire-horse went there and spent the evening inquiring whether any one had purchased a horse at Guildford Market. He lodged that night and the next, with the horse, in an out-house, and during the intervening day he made further inquiries in the places round Cobham as to purchasers of horses. According to his account it had suddenly dawned upon him that morning that the name of the place to which he had been directed to take the horse was Crondale, whence he was now proceeding.

Dum looked at the fellow in speechless amazement for a few seconds and then blurted out—

"Look here, you know, why didn't you take the horse back to your guv'nor?"

"D'ye think oi wants to be called a fool?—not I, thankee!" and with a knowing wink and an expression of intense self-satisfaction on his face away he jolted on the back of his steed.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Dum; "it's one of Shakespere's clowns in the flesh.

That's the sort of raw material poor Kingsley had to work upon."

When we reached the top of the hill we saw this strange being repeating his story to a postman, and farther on we saw him stop an old woman, evidently repeating it again.

"Why, it's the ancient mariner on horseback," I exclaimed; "he's holding us all with his skinny hand and his glittering eye."

"There's something uncanny about the fellow," declared Dum; "I begin to feel like the wedding-guest—

> "I fear thee, ancient mariner!
> I fear thy skinny hand!
> And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
> As is the ribbed sea-sand!"

We paused at the top of the hill to take in the pretty orchard of almond-trees just struggling into bloom. The sight was a gladsome one to our Cockney eyes, for the spring was tarrying, and although we were at the end of the first week in April these were the first almond-trees we had seen in bloom. After a run down we panted up the hill to "The Jolly Farmer," where we found the ancient mariner telling his

story to the landlord and slaking his thirst from a pewter pot.

Taking the right-hand road by the side of the inn we had an enjoyable up-and-down run through military Yorktown and Camberley to Blackwater on the edge of Hartford Flats. Dum reminded me that this fine stretch of wild moorland was the scene of Kingsley's run with the hounds which led to his writing the hunting song, "Go Hark!" which for inspiriting movement has never been surpassed. Dum treated me to the words as we rode by the side of the moor down the Yately road—

"Yon sound's neither sheep-bell nor bark,
They're running—they're running, Go hark!
The sport may be lost by a moment's delay,
So whip up the puppies and scurry away.
Dash down through the cover by dingle and dell,
There's a gate at the bottom—I know it full well;
And they're running—they're running,
Go hark!

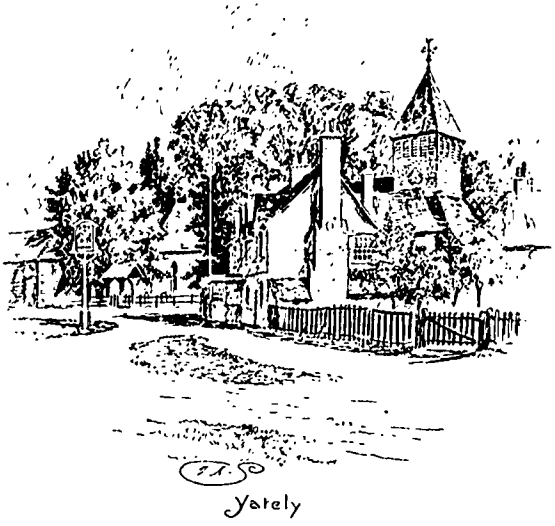
"They're running—they're running, Go hark!
One fence and we're out at the park;
Sit down in your saddles and race at the brook,
Then smash at the bullfinch; no time for a look.

Leave cravens and skirters to dangle behind,
He's away for the moors, in the teeth of the wind,
And they're running—they're running,
Go hark !

" They're running—they're running, Go hark !
Let them run on and run till it's dark !
Well with them are we, and well with them
we'll be,
While there's wind in our horses and daylight
to see :
Then shog along homewards, chat over the fight,
And hear in our dreams the sweet music all night
Of—they're running—they're running,
Go hark ! "

Dum had plenty of breath for reciting the lines, for all the way to Yately we were on a gentle incline and the machines were going " by themselves." We slowed up to look at the strangely built village church, with its queer steeple, and the fine old country inn, " The Dog and Partridge," with its many white-framed square windows. Another mile, still on a gentle incline, and we were at the village of Eversley Cross, the roads at that point forming a veritable cross. Turning off at the

left we rode on until we came to an old manor house, and then we caught the first glimpse of the square tower of Eversley church, with



its four pinnacles rising above the haystacks and farm buildings. Up a stiff incline and round to the right, and we dismounted at the old oaken gateway of the churchyard.

Hiding our bicycles behind a hedge we passed through the gateway into the path

lined with Irish yews which Kingsley himself had planted, the silence of the noonday only broken by the soft cooing of pigeons in the neighbouring farmyard. A few steps and there,

on the left hand, was the well-worn grassy path leading to Charles Kingsley's grave, under the spreading fir-tree which hangs over the fence dividing the churchyard from the rectory garden—"Just under our great fir-tree, which I had always marked out for you and me," he wrote to his wife fifteen years before he died. The grave is bordered with a stone fencing enclosing the green turf upon which some one, to whom the memory of Kingsley is dear, had placed a wreath of hot-house flowers.

Poor Dum was terribly upset at the sight of this evidence of tender regard for his hero. Why had we not brought some flowers—what thoughtless brutes we were—we could easily

have carried them—it was the duty of any one who venerated Kingsley to bring such a token as this with them. I soothed him as well as I could, telling him that we had brought there something that was dearer to Kingsley than even a wreath of flowers—two hearts that had been moved by his noble example. The simply carved stone at the head of the grave bears the inscription—

God is Love.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

January 23rd, 1875,

And Fanny his wife.

Amavimus Amamus Amabimus.

By the side of this husband and wife, whose married life was so many years of idyllic companionship, lies the wife's sister, Charlotte, wife of Anthony Froude, whose grave was a sacred spot to Kingsley, to which he went almost daily to commune with her spirit. To lovers of Parson Lot the whole churchyard should have a peculiar attraction. It is a monument to the man himself, for it was the scene of one of the most characteristic instances of his "muscular Christianity." In a letter to his

wife he wrote: "I and B have been working with our own hands as hard as the four men we have got on. We have planted all the shrubs in the churchyard. We have gravelled the new path with fine gravel, and edged it with turf; we have levelled, delved, planned, and plotted. Altogether I am delighted at the result, and feel better, thanks to two days' hard work with pick and spade, than I have done for a fortnight."

I looked about the churchyard for the sexton whom I had seen there three years before, but could not find him. He was then very old and had rheumatism in every joint; it was a difficult task for him to sweep the dead leaves from the paths. We had talked of Kingsley, whom he remembered well, and spoke of with tender affection and admiration. "He was very good to poor," was the old man's phrase again and again at the end of each story of the parson's doings. One remark of the old man's was too good to be forgotten. I had asked him whether many people came to see Kingsley's grave. "No," he replied, as he rested his chin on the end of his broom-handle; "not so many as used to come." Then, after a few moments'

reflection, he turned his poor old gray, almost sightless eyes to mine, and added quite seriously, and with a touch of sadness : "I suppose they've all been." We learned afterwards, down in the village, that the poor old sexton was now lying under the green turf from which for so many years he had swept the dead leaves, as I had seen him doing on that sunny summer morning.

Over the brick porch of the church is one of the now rare Westminster Fire Insurance tablets, dated 1717. We passed through the porch, opened the wire door, so necessary for keeping out the birds, and entered the church. There was the font, in which Kingsley, when he first came to Eversley, found a cracked kitchen basin for holding the baptismal water. The pretty little altar is a striking contrast to the square table covered by a moth-eaten cloth that did duty in the barbarous days before Kingsley took up the formidable task of civilising the poaching and gipsy population of Eversley. In those days the farmer did not hesitate to turn his sheep into the churchyard for pasture, holy communion was celebrated only three times a year, and when the new parson proposed monthly communions, the church-

wardens only consented on his promising himself to supply the wine for the extra celebrations.

Apart from the memory of Kingsley and of those unconventional village sermons that echoed along these walls the church contains nothing that is remarkable. At the left-hand side of the altar is the tomb of "Dame Marianne Cope," with an effigy of the dame lying on the top with her little terrier dog at her feet. Near the pulpit is a memorial brass to the glory of God and the beloved memories of Charles Kingsley and of Francis Eliza his wife.

"What a lesson to us all," murmured Dummehrlichkeit, "that one of the greatest men of this century should have been happy and contented, year after year, to give the best that was in him to a small congregation of rustics in this village church."

I agreed, and reminded Dum that Parson Lot, although his congregation sometimes consisted of little more than a dozen people, gave as much time and attention to the preparation of these discourses as when he was going to preach in Chester Cathedral or Westminster Abbey.

We wandered round to the rectory, the old house in which were written the tales that are read and read again wherever the English language is spoken — *Alton Locke*, *Yeast*, *Hypatia*, *Hereward the Wake*, *The Water-Babies*, and *Two Years Ago*, besides a long list of essays and lectures on scientific and social subjects. The rectory seems to have had troublous times since it resounded to the laughter of the happy parson and his wife and children, and house and garden lack the trimness and beauty that the loving care of a devoted husband and a no less devoted wife bestowed upon them. The house is a two-storied one of red brick, with a tiled roof, with two bow windows on each floor, and a glass-covered porch in the centre—the porch wherein Ben King the rat-catcher stood at two o'clock in the morning, trying to wake the parson to visit a dying man in the village, but being "taken nervous, didn't make row enough," and the parson was not roused until five o'clock, as described in one of the delightful colloquial letters which he loved to write to Tom Hughes. It is almost surrounded by a moat, dry in the front of the house, but filled with a stream of

water in other parts. When Kingsley first went to live there the house was damp, and in a wretched state for want of repairs; indeed for two or three years a large portion of his income was spent in drainage work and in making the place fit to live in. There is the window from which in the days of poverty he looked out at the hounds and huntsmen passing by, with tears in his eyes, because not only was he unable to keep a mount, but at that time he thought it unwise, considering the poaching tendencies of his flock, to take part in the chase.

In front of the house are some fine old trees with gnarled trunks and erratic spreading branches. Through the boughs of these husband and wife could see from the window their children running up the grassy slope on the other side of the road to the top of the hill, where stands the little hut which the loving father built as a play-room for them. In all the world there could not have been a happier home than this. Kingsley's love for his wife and children was as great as his passionate devotion to the work which he felt that a Power greater than the love of man had called upon

him to do. He was never too busy to mend the children's toys, or to dry their tears in their tiny troubles. His eldest son has given the world a glimpse of that happy home enclosed by the time-beaten walls of the old rectory.

"'Perfect love casteth out all fear,' was the motto on which my father based his theory of bringing up his children; and this theory he put in practice from their babyhood till when he left them as men and women. From this, and from the interest he took in all their pursuits, their pleasures, trials, and even the petty details of their everyday life, there sprung up a friendship between father and children that increased in intensity and depth with years. . . . Perhaps the brightest picture of the past that I look back to now — that we can all look back to — is, not the eager look of delight with which he used to hail any of our little successes—not any special case of approval, but it is the drawing-room at Eversley in the evenings when we were all at home and by ourselves. There he sat, with one hand in mother's, forgetting his own hard work and worry in leading our fun and frolic, with a kindly smile on his lips, and a loving

light in that bright gray eye which made us feel that, in the broadest sense of the word, he was our father."

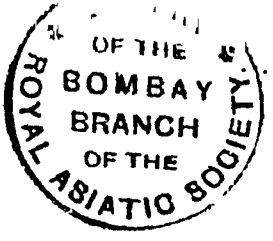
At the back of the church we found a low swinging gate, which we opened, and passed into a charming sylvan path skirting the end of the rectory orchard. A few steps brought us to a wooden bridge crossing a stream which opened out into a large pond with an island in its centre. Evidently this was one of the troublesome watercourses that gave Kingsley so much anxiety in his attempts to keep the old house free from damp; but it was a pretty spot, and the wooden hand-rails of the narrow bridge formed inviting seats whereon Dum and I could take our afternoon rest.

"Poor old Parson Lot," said Dum, puffing at his pipe, and glancing up at the window of the room wherein Kingsley died; "he was a splendid fighter; but what a pity he didn't live in a happier world. He was one of the loving spirits who would have appreciated social peace. I often think of that remark of his when he was Professor of History, 'Gladly would I throw up history to think of nothing but dicky-birds.' It sounds like nonsense, but

there's a lot in it. There was another striking thing he said, too, something about throwing away all pursuits but natural history, so that he might die with his mind full of God's facts, instead of men's lies."

We sat there talking of Kingsley's love for animals, and his belief in their having a future state; of his efforts on behalf of sanitation and education; of his common-sense utterances to working-men, and of his love for Maurice, until the afternoon grew chilly and Dum came down from the clouds and began to clamour for food. Then, after a farewell look at Kingsley's grave, we mounted our bicycles and rode into the village. There was nothing to be had but bread-and-cheese and beer, but we fared sumptuously on that, while the landlord told us how as a boy he had been taught in the Sunday School by Parson Lot and played cricket with him on holidays. "He was a good man for Eversley," said he, "a very good man; but it's all very different now."

"That may be true," remarked Dum, as we rode off towards Yately; "but we haven't gone back to the state of things that existed before Parson Lot took his coat off."



VII

SOME MODERNS

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

TO all of us the verses were familiar as household words; but when the Professor read them aloud on that Sunday afternoon, I do not think there was

one of us who did not discover in them a deeper beauty and pathos, a loftier note of music than we had found in them before. His intonation in uttering the words, "Break, break, break," was to me a revelation; it was one of those "illuminations" that so often flood a subject with a new light as we listen to one great mind interpreting the work of another. We try to explain to others our experience of such a moment, and we miserably fail — "the heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." To the lover of poetry there can be no greater infliction than to hear others read it—as a rule. The worst offenders are the clergy, who have endless opportunities, under the most favourable conditions, for thrilling their congregations by an efficient rendering of some of the grandest poetry that has ever been penned. Men from our great universities have a peculiar method of reading aloud, which is deplorably successful in obliterating from poetry all its beauty. When, therefore, the Professor, after some appreciative remarks on Tennyson, opened the book to quote an example, I trembled for the poet's reputation. It was

fortunately in safe keeping. The effect was magical: the reader's voice, as Elia said of Mrs. Jordan's, sank into the heart, and we all remained strangely silent, until the Professor, after a long pause, said quietly, "*That* is poetry."

The incident sent me to Tennyson again. I had neglected him for some years; but that night, when all in the house had retired to rest—and that is the time to read poetry—I took down the volumes and had a delightful hour of browsing.

> I hope to see my Pilot face to face
> When I have crost the bar.

The lines recalled those fateful days when the world seemed to pause with bated breath while the old poet's life trembled in the balance. I recalled the descriptions I had read of the moonlight streaming over the silent Blackdown into the death chamber of the house on the side of that glorious Surrey hill. I had not been there since Tennyson's death, and an irresistible desire came over me to see the place once again There were other personal memories that made

Blackdown very dear to me. I had climbed the hill more than once with one in whom a generous and sympathetic heart is combined with profound knowledge and a power of expression that has been rarely equalled. We had stood side by side on the hill-top, and from revelling in the lovely scene before us had fallen into a discussion on those deep and appalling problems of our civilisation which must ever be haunting men who have hearts to feel and brains to contrive. I would go over the old familiar ground and dream those days back again.

When the next holy day came—and what holy days holidays are to the gentle cyclist—I was up betimes, for there were at least fifty-two miles of cycling, over two hours' railway travelling, and as much time as possible to be crowded in for loafing—all to be done before nightfall. A contemptible task to any of the gentry who curl themselves over the handle-bars and ride against time; but a full day's work for one who wants to have "a look around" on the way. The weather—that subject of undying interest to cyclists—was decidedly unpromising. A south-westerly wind was blowing freshly and

not an inch of blue sky was to be seen ; but the man whose holidays are few and far between must run some risk. Time being precious, and Kensington, Clapham, Battersea-rise, and Wandsworth not being particularly interesting, I took train to Kingston, from whence in a few minutes I was taking a peep at the river at Thames Ditton. Then came that glorious mile and a half of dead-level road, and a splendid surface to boot, on towards Esher. It is a long but gentle ascent to the pretty race-course and the village beyond, which begins to look as if it were fast becoming a London suburb. Pope and Thomson both praised the beauties of Esher, a unique honour for so unpretentious a place, for Esher displays no egotism regarding its association with the great Cardinal Wolsey, nor have I ever heard an Esher man boast of the fact that the sisters Jane and Anna Maria Porter lived there for many years. Yet our grandmothers and grandfathers devoured the sisters' novels ravenously, quite oblivious of the fact that they contained no problems and had no particular purpose beyond encouraging a love of courage and virtue. Does any one now read *The Scottish Chiefs*, *Thaddeus of*

Warsaw, *The Hungarian Brothers*, and *The Field of Forty Footsteps?* I fear not, for they have disappeared from the twopenny and fourpenny boxes of the second-hand booksellers, and even from the barrows of the worthy literary scavengers in the Farringdon-road.

I pounded away up the hill, past the fine old "Bear Inn," down the steep slope with a dash which sent me well up the opposite hill without undue exertion. It was a case of up and down again to Fairmile Common, the level two miles across which was a relief after those "steepy" hills. I could not resist the temptation of dismounting at the common to take in the charming views looking towards the Thames valley and backward down the road to Esher. The sky was beginning to look more promising, and I felt hopeful of seeing sunshine yet. On again I pedalled, and at the end of the common plunged down the hill into Cobham Street, turned to the right, and, just catching a passing glimpse of the house where Matthew Arnold lived for many years, shot across the bridge and rode as far up the terrible hill as I could. At the top one is

always tempted to keep straight on down the inviting and pretty road leading to Byfleet, but the Ripley road turns sharply to the left, down which you see facing you what looks like a formidable hill, but which turns out to be a comparatively easy ascent. No wonder that this is the most popular cycling road in the South of England. The surface is in splendid condition nearly all the year round, the down-hill runs are just sufficiently steep to be exhilarating without being in the least dangerous even to a novice, and, more important still, if you can only shut your eyes to the telegraph poles and wires, the road is exceedingly beautiful.

I do not think much of the man who can pass through Wisley Common without feeling his pulses stirred. At no time of the year is it without a certain loveliness, but to see it at its best you must ride down the Ripley road when the heather has covered the common with its annual coat of purple bloom. In the late summer evenings when the sun is sinking behind the pine trees, tinting their trunks with a rosy pink glow, it is a dream of loveliness to watch the heather bloom changing from purple

to red and russet-brown. The shades of colour are changing every moment as the angle of the sunbeams is deflected, and the colours vary at every square foot of turf. And the scorcher rushes unheedingly by, with a great bunch of kingcups remorselessly torn up by the roots that are never to gladden the earth again. It is not only man who cries aloud in the unheeding wilderness. Nature herself, with all her loveliness, appeals in vain. Who can hope to succeed where she fails? Cyclists should enjoy the delights of this perfect road as frequently as they can, while there is yet time, for I fear the day will soon be here when that rattling, snorting, and spitting Apollyon, the motor car, will make the road impossible for all but himself. No more shall we be able to sit down and contemplate the quiet, peaceful beauty of the lake opposite to the "Hut"; the silence of those wooded banks will be gone for ever, and a stream of clanking and rattling machinery, like a lengthening arm from the noisy metropolis, will drag the whirl, the hurry, and bustle of city life down to this haven of calmness and peace.

From the "Hut" at Wisley to Ripley the

road is almost level save for a sharp run down into the famous village, which was at one time the Mecca of the London cyclist. Just at the entrance to the village, on the right-hand side, is one of those pleasant cyclists' "coteries" that are unfortunately so few and far between. Ripley has been somewhat spoilt by the incursions of armies of Cockneys on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, and even the "Anchor Inn" has lost much of its old charm. On this particular morning three motor cars stood before its ancient frontage giving forth horrible noises and vapours, their fearfully and wonderfully clad owners prying anxiously into labyrinths of cogs and pistons.

Another six miles and I was wheeling my machine down the steep and rough-paved hill at Guildford, amid quite an imposing array of traffic. Had sufficient time been at my disposal I would certainly have paid another visit to the fine old Grammar School, Abbot's Hospice, and the Castle. As my objective was so far ahead I was obliged to keep to the road. Turning up Quarry Street, five miles of excellent road brought me through Shalford and Broadford to Godalming.

Whenever you are passing along this road from Guildford to Godalming, and have the time to spare, after passing Shalford, look out for a finger-post on the right hand, pointing to Compton. A ride of two miles will bring you to the village church, which is the most interesting in all Surrey. It contains some of the greatest puzzles that have ever disturbed the peace of mind of antiquaries, is one of the old churches that dotted the Pilgrims' Way through Surrey on the road to Canterbury and the shrine of St. Thomas, and must be voted by every one who visits it a delightful old-world place in which to pass a dreamy half-hour. To the pilgrim on wheels there is a shrine at Compton itself, and that is the home of the great-hearted Watts, the veteran artist and lover of mankind, who acts the part of a benign providence in the little village nestling under the brow of the Hog's Back. In the new graveyard, a short distance from the church, there towers up a terra-cotta chapel designed by the artist and decorated with beautiful tiles which he and his wife taught the villagers to make in the long winter evenings. I hear that these Compton village terra-

cotta tiles have become so famous that there is now a considerable demand for them, and what was once a pastime has become a lucrative industry.

In riding through Godalming's clumsily paved High Street, one suffers so much jolting that it is difficult to "take in" the picturesque old timbered houses, with their gabled roofs, that are pleasant relics of the days when houses were built to last as long as possible, and not solely with a view to paying off a mortgage. For a quarter of a mile the road rises somewhat steeply, then there is an easy run down to Milford. You are now entering the charming district in which Hook and Birket Foster did the greater part of their work. The next two miles is a steady upward ride through lovely country to Lee Park, where you have an opportunity of seeing something of what a millionaire can do with his money. It is an awkward descent to Brook Street and needs careful riding if you set any value on your neck. In September the finest blackberries are to be found in these lanes, and in abundance. You need not be thirsty for an inch of the way. To-day there is scarcely a bud to be seen on

the hedges, although the second week of April is gone. How the blackbirds have heart enough to sing in these cold spring days is marvellous; perhaps it is an effort to keep up their spirits, like the country boy's whistling as he walks through the churchyard on a dark winter's night.

Now comes a trial for your strength and your skill as a cyclist. The road through Brook Street on to Grayswood and Haslemere is decidedly stiff work, and if you are wise you will walk up some of the sharp inclines and enjoy such scenery as you will find in few places within so easy a distance of London. Spinning down the hill leading into Haslemere High Street, I pulled up to take a peep at

the home of the veteran artist, Mr. J. W. Whymper. It stands on the right-hand side of the High Street, and is easy to identify. It is a large square-built house, three stories high, the window frames and porch painted white, the walls nearly covered with foliage, and a fine old bay tree in the front garden. I put up my machine at the "White Horse," for there had been heavy rains during the preceding three days, and I felt pretty sure that the road to Aldworth, being protected from wind and sun by high banks, would be almost unrideable. By an unexpected stroke of good fortune the morning had turned out wonderfully bright, and there was every prospect of an exceptionally fine view from the top of Blackdown.

Turning leftward from mine inn, a few hundred yards brought me to the familiar old timbered house at the corner of the road leading to the Educational Museum, of which Haslemere is so justly proud. To thee, O great-hearted Rayner Storr and thy fellow-members of the Haslemere Microscope and Natural History Society, and especially to thee, thou gifted teacher and princely giver, Jonathan

Hutchinson, I doff my cap. If all who could would do what you have done to place knowledge within the reach of the people, the world would be a brighter and a better place. Here in this Surrey village these gentlemen have established an educational institution which, as far as my knowledge goes, is without a counterpart in the wide world. Here knowledge is to be obtained as free as the breezes on Hindhead, and in charming and unique surroundings. You enter—there is no janitor to say you nay—and you find one side of a courtyard roofed in to shelter a series of shelves and compartments containing geological specimens arranged to illustrate the life-story of this old earth. It was here that I first had brought home to me the rather humiliating fact that we humans are comparatively newcomers on the planet upon which we strut about so proudly, as if it had always belonged to us. Compared with the millions of years represented by each of these compartments we are so fresh to our environment that we can have hardly had time to set our home in order and make things comfortable. As this hypothesis fits in very significantly with the hard facts of everyday life, the most

casual dropper-in may be induced to think that there is something in the science of strata, fossils, and streaky diagrams after all.

At your own sweet will you enter a comfortable reading-room, the walls of which are lined with hundreds of shelves containing over 7000 carefully selected books. "Help yourselves, my friends," say the founders and supporters of this quiet haven; "take down any books you like; here is a chair and a shelter for the cycling pilgrim overtaken by the storm or weary with the noonday heat." Tired of reading, you walk across the courtyard into the museum, which is happily not a museum as such dry-as-dust institutions are generally known, but a place where a man may learn something in the pleasantest and easiest manner. Lucky indeed are you if you happen to cycle here on a day when Dr. Jonathan Hutchinson is giving one of his remarkable lectures. A tall, kindly-looking, elderly gentleman steps in from the garden through the open doorway; you detect the humour in the dark eyes that beam smilingly upon you through spectacles. He advances towards the expectant audience, rubbing his hands together as if looking

forward with keen enjoyment to the task before him. Then comes one of the most wonderful experiences I know of. In quiet conversational tones you have a stream of knowledge poured into you in such a way that you cannot help receiving it. Under the magic touch of the man, who has mastered the great secret of imparting knowledge to others, no science is dismal, a difficult point is fixed upon the mind for ever by a stroke of sly humour that drives the impression home, the dry facts of science are transformed into vital realities by a tender reference to human sufferings, human love, and human fears and aspirations. And all this good work is done with no flourishing of trumpets, no puff interviews in the newspapers, but quietly and unostentatiously, in the simple faith that good will come of it. In the porch you will notice a number of little tin cups. They are empty now; but as soon as the spring flowers begin to brighten the banks of the Haslemere lanes a specimen of each one will be carefully gathered, placed in one of the tin cups and labelled, so that no child in the village, and no poor Cockney tripper like myself, need grow up in ignorance

of the names and the characteristic properties of the flowers and herbs that are to be found in fields, hedgerows, and woodlands. May Fortune ever be kind to thee, good Dr. Jonathan, and to thy fellow-workers, and may a bountiful harvest of souls saved from the dark abyss of ignorance grow up from the seed thou art sowing.

Lord Tennyson's Road, Nr. Aldworth

Leaving the museum I walked along the road until I discovered the finger-post, almost hidden by fir-trees, pointing to Blackdown. It is necessary to be very careful at this point to avoid taking the wrong road. At the forked roads take the one branching rightwards, which will shortly bring you into a rough tree-lined lane known locally as Lord Tennyson's road. I believe I am correct in stating that the road was made at the poet's expense, hence the

name being in the possessive. The lane ascends and runs along the edge of the down, and if you are wise you will pause at every field-gate on the way to take in the views of undulating fields of every shade of green, broken here and there by clumps of timber, and in the distance the towering ramparts of the south downs. Every yard of the lane is beautiful, a fitting pathway to the home of a great poet. At one part it is lined on either side with slim silver birches, the branches and twigs forming a lace-like network against the blue sky, and the high banks are decked with a drapery of vivid green moss. I should have dearly liked to have been walking along this road on a certain Thursday morning in the month of August 1880. According to an old friend of the Tennysons, on this particular morning, the grave old poet, who has sometimes been accused of austerity, might have been seen coming down the road in his carriage with his little grandson Alfred, aged two years, on his knee. The child was wearing his grandfather's great sombrero, and the poet's massive head was surmounted by the little boy's tiny straw hat, with its tails of blue ribbon hanging jauntily behind. I like to

think of the great author of *In Memoriam* in his character of playmate to his little grandchild. At the end of the first mile the lane enters upon the open down, and here, on the left-hand side, the view has in it something approaching to grandeur. Continuing along the sandy road across the down you presently come to a white gate, the outer bulwark of Aldworth House. As I understand there is a right-of-way through this gateway; I walked through and continued along the road until I arrived at a lodge where an ominous white board with the legend "Private" barred my way. The house is built on the side of the down, and is almost entirely hidden by trees. From what can be seen of it there is nothing about it to impress one. A commonplace millionaire might have a dozen such houses built at short notice. The site, however, is one that even millionaires cannot command every day.

It is possible, by standing on the high ground near the house, to obtain almost the identical view seen from the poet's own windows, and which he described in the lines addressed to Sir Edward Hamley—

Our birches yellowing, and from each
  The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
  Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view,
  Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue,
  With one gray glimpse of sea.

The stroke of genius in the last two lines can only be fully appreciated by those who have stood upon Blackdown on such a morning as this. The "one gray glimpse of sea" I shrewdly suspect the poet took on hearsay, for it is doubtful if he ever saw it with his near-sighted eyes. With abnormally long sight, and on exceptionally clear days, I have seen the sea from this point, but careful scrutiny is necessary to find it. In the opposite direction the view is equally fine, and to see it in comfort and to advantage it is best to make for the little green hut which you can see to the left of the lodge. In front of the hut, covered by a little verandah, you will find a comfortable seat protected from the wind. Evidently there was nothing churlish about Tennyson's desire for seclusion, or he would not have generously

placed this seat here for the convenience of pilgrims to Aldworth.

This hillside of Blackdown should have a peculiar interest for all lovers of Tennyson, for it is not too much to say that his residence here added many years to his life. He was in a bad state of health when he came here to take possession of his new home about the year 1870. The fine air cured him of the troublesome attacks of hay-fever, and he found a new joy in life in taking long tramps over these hills and dales. With his broad-brimmed wide-awake hat and his short blue cape with velvet collar he was a familiar figure in the landscape. He would tramp along with his sons, often chanting a poem that he was composing. Although he is said to have often run wildly home at the sight of a tourist in the distance, he liked to chat with the country people, especially seeking out the poor old men, from whom he always tried to ascertain their thoughts on death and the future life. His poems form a striking proof of his being a painstaking observer of Nature, and we have it on the evidence of his son that, when walking about the country-side, if he saw a strange bird or a new flower, he

would carefully look it up on returning home. Had he not been so careful and painstaking an observer, we might have lost such lines as those in the familiar "Poet's Song:"—

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,
The snake slipt under a spray,
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
And stared, with his foot on the prey.

Strolling across the heather I thought of the extraordinary change in Tennyson's life, from the old London and Rossetti days to the quiet serenity of this Surrey mountain. Yet bits of the old Bohemian *camaraderie* days clung to him to the end; he could thrill the world with a stanza written between the puffs of smoke from his pipe and after his evening pint of port —no precious person he. What inspiration he must have received from these surroundings. It is a typical English landscape; throughout this vast panorama, from extreme left to extreme right, and straight ahead as far as eyes can see, almost every square inch of land is cultivated, and here and there the bright green fields are flecked with kine. This is what impresses your born colonial—no miles of waste veldt,

no barren plains, every inch of soil knowing seed-time and harvest. This was the scene upon which the old poet gazed during his last few days on earth, lying upon a sofa in the south window of his study. As I watch the shadows of the clouds moving swiftly from field to field, I wonder what visions those were that passed before Tennyson's eyes in those fading hours, and which prompted his lips to murmur, "I have wonderful thoughts about God and the Universe, and feel as if looking into the other world."

If, in walking back to the road, you make a slight detour to the topmost point you can look down upon Blackdown Cottage, for some years the summer home of Mr. Frederic Harrison. The speck of white, a short distance from the cottage, was in those days called by the members of the great writer's family "Kilmainham," because there the peaceful solitude necessary for authorship was always to be had. There was a local legend that the original owner of Blackdown Cottage had caused this rough pavilion to be built because he desired to have a retired place of shelter wherein he might practise the key-bugle undisturbed and undisturbing.

Returning to mine inn, I re-mounted and pedalled past the railway station to the other end of the village, and on three-quarters of a mile to Shottermill Church. As I like to see these little village churches decorated for Eastertide, I stepped out of the sunshine into the shady quiet place to find in it a wealth of golden daffodils and white lilies gleaming from beds of bright green moss. Near the altar with its pathetic Calvary carved in dark oak I came across a belated choir-boy. Acting impulsively, without realising the absurdity of my inquiry, I asked him whether he knew the cottage where George Eliot used to live. I fear to record the boy's reply, because an almost identical story is told by everybody who ever made an inquiry anywhere about George Eliot. This boy however really did say, "No; I dunno. Is he the new carrier?" From the description given me by a friend I had little difficulty in finding Brookbank Cottage, which is lower down the shady lane, beyond the church, on the right-hand side, just before you reach the little post-office and the inn called "The Staff of Life." It is a pretty little house with

leaded windows, well sheltered by warm fir-trees.

In this particular house the great authoress did not live many months; but during that

time a considerable portion of *Middlemarch* was written and sent off to Mr. John Blackwood. "If there is a chance that *Middlemarch* will be good for anything," she writes from this Brookbank Cottage, "I don't want to

break down and die without finishing it. And whatever 'the tow on my distaff' may be, my strength to unwind it has not been abundant lately." On the incomparable George Henry Lewes, Shottermill and its surroundings seem to have had an excellent effect. He was far from being a robust man at this time, but George Eliot writes of him during their stay here: "George is gloriously well, and studying, writing, walking, eating and sleeping with equal vigour. He is enjoying the life here immensely. Our country could hardly be surpassed in its particular kind of beauty—perpetual undulation of heath and copse, and clear views of hurrying water, with here and there a grand pine wood, steep wood-clothed promontories and gleaming pools." For only seven more brief years were the two great spirits to enjoy that splendid comradeship which had sanctified their lives and brought out all that was greatest and best in them, and then the man was to be taken and the woman left to write in the agony of her grief, "Here I and Sorrow sit."

The neighbourhood of Haslemere has, during the past ten or twelve years, become

quite a famous haunt of literary men. Not only have they congregated in the village, but they have climbed to the topmost heights of Hindhead, once the special and jealously guarded preserve of poor Professor Tyndall, now being overrun not only by people who are merely rich, but also by lodging-house keepers and hotel proprietors. 'Tis but another step—peace there, O Truepenny!—to a cable tram from the village to the head, or perchance an American-made electric lift. Fortunately we shall all be gone when Father Time makes this stride, so let us be thankful as we push our cycles up steep and unrideable roads, like this to old Hindhead, that we have still many square miles of old England free from factories, tram-cars, "model" dwellings, villas, and undesirable residences.

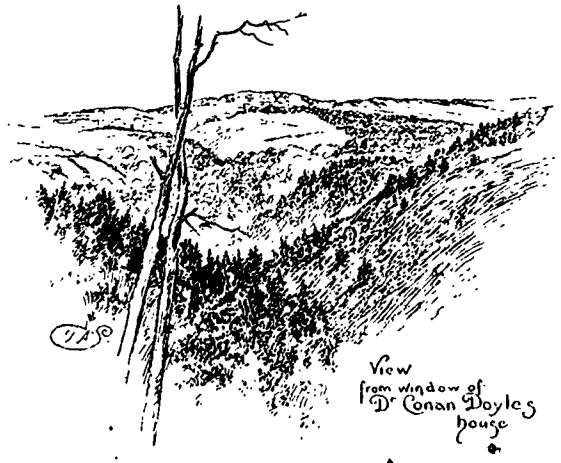
The only displeasing thing about Hindhead is his deceptive behaviour. When you leave Shottermill you are lured on by a series of easy gradients and even down-grade relaxations into the belief that the climb up is a fraud and that it is an easy-going affair after all. But an awful awaking is in store for you—that is, if you happen to turn the beam at anything like

twelve stone. While I was mopping my brow halfway up towards Tyndall's house, a sylph-like young lady glided past me with a scornful smile on her lips. It is all very well for these Excelsior young things; their weight is a negligible quantity, and provided that their hearts are sound—that is, physically—and that their muscles are in fair condition, they might ride up a slope fifteen per cent steeper than this; but for me the time has come when wheeling pure and simple is frequently a necessity. On this particular climb the road is so picturesque that no one need grumble if he has to walk half the distance. Just before reaching the top I noticed the familiar dull-looking gabled house on the right. But what had become of its glory? Where was the famous Gargantuan screen that once shut off all signs of humanity? A few forlorn-looking poles swayed ludicrously in the wind, fragments of fir branches fluttering about their base. Then I remembered having read in the newspapers of a certain gale having most unceremoniously toppled over this monument of human irritability. A good gale and a charitable one; let us forget as speedily as

possible the silly old screen and the rather pitiful tale it told, and only remember the great scientist who wrestled with Nature for her secrets and so successfully interpreted them to our weaker understanding.

Elderly folk who tramped up the hill in their younger days, when the "Huts" was almost the only sign of human habitation to be seen here, will be astonished to hear that the mountain is now of sufficient importance to have a post-office all to itself, where you can not only post a letter or despatch a telegram, but open a savings bank account and obtain information about government annuities. As I dismounted at the corner I thought of the wonderful amount of "copy" that must have been popped into that open-mouthed letter-box during the past few years. In the house opposite to the post-office I believe the wonderful adventures of Sherlock Holmes were penned. By stepping just inside the garden gate you can see the marvellous view down Nutcombe Bottom which greets Dr. Conan Doyle when he opens his windows to take a breath of this intoxicating Surrey air. A wild ravine of firs and pines and heather seems to

stretch out right on to the towering downs of the Sussex coast. What must be the feelings of unsuccessful novelists toiling in Grub Street when they come here as day-trippers and gaze upon this scene of worldly prosperity and



natural beauty! The bread-and-cheese and beer at the rough bar of the "Huts" must be stale and flat indeed to them as they furtively glance at the cold fowls and ham and the champagne in the hotel portion that is preserved for the vulgar rich.

A very short distance down the road at the side of the "Huts" you will see on your right hand a white gate with "The Croft" painted on the side post. The brown-roofed house itself can only just be seen in the distance, but it is interesting to all who love good books and their writers as the home that for some years prolonged the life of poor Grant Allen, the man who transformed the science of botany from its dry-as-dust stage into its proper place as the most interesting and delightful of all sciences. He could, from this hill-top observatory of his, have taught the world much that it would have been the better for knowing; but the world did not want to learn, it only wanted to be tickled, and Grant Allen being responsible for other lives dearer to him than his own, had to tickle the dull monster, to make him laugh and shudder alternately, and for this bladder-buffeting a reward was given which was denied to Truth.

Pedalling back to the "Huts" and thence along the road leading to Liphook, I turned aside at the finger-post pointing to Grayshott, for I had resolved to take lunch at the model hostelry under the sign of "The Fox and the

Pelican." Some of the Greathearts who live at Hindhead and Haslemere have erected this hostelry at Grayshott village as a place of refreshment and entertainment for the villagers and for pilgrims on wheels. The signboard that swings in the wind is quite a work of art, and when time has toned down the glaring red bricks the house will be as pretty as it is now useful. Here, in a clean and cheerful wainscoted room, you can lunch like a king for less than two shillings with a huge glass tankard of good ale thrown in. And book-shelves too! Memories of average frowsy parlours of roadside inns came across my mind, and their barbarous literary aliment—the beer-stained daily paper, the railway time-table, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, *The Dairyman's Daughter*,

and a Ready Reckoner. But here, ye gods, was a veritable feast that almost made me long to be benighted. *The Gospel in Brief*, by Tolstoy; *The Prose Writings of John Milton*; a complete set of Carlyle; Wordsworth's Poems; Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad*; and Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*—these I found among the neatly-arranged shelves of "The Fox and the Pelican." What a haven for a rainy afternoon, what an alleviation for a cracked centre-bracket!

While I was "pumping up" my back tyre, preparatory to the ride home, I was entertained by a native with his views about the people who had descended upon Hindhead during the past few years. He was, I found, of a rather pessimistic cast, but not intolerant of the presence of these interlopers. "Not a bad chap," was the verdict he gave in most cases. When, however, I asked him whether he knew where Mr. Bernard Shaw lived, I thought he betrayed more feeling than the question warranted. "Mr. Bernard Sho-re—'ee didn't live nowhere—he only took a furnished 'ouse in Portsmouth road, *'ee* did." Now I wonder what the versatile St. Bernard had done to this

man. Had he made him the subject of one of those awful jokes of his? had he turned this poor native inside out, in the *un*pleasant style, at the Grayshott equivalent for the old Coger's Hall? Who shall tell!

The spring afternoon was passing away all too swiftly, and I wanted to have my usual hour's rest among the heather at the edge of the Devil's Punchbowl, so I hurried from "The Fox and the Pelican" and its delightful book-shelves and good ale to the footpath leading to the old resting-place where one has a magnificent view of the wild home of the broom-squire and the wonderful lands beyond. Just as I sprang from the machine I had a remarkable experience of that colour-protection which forms such an important part in the life of every bird and beast. I detected a very fine lark in the act of running under the shadow of a tuft of gorse. The illusion was complete; the shadow of the gorse and the colour of the bird were so identical that had I not known that the bird was there I could not possibly have distinguished him from the surrounding colour. The most remarkable part of the incident was the unmistakable evidence given that the bird was fully

aware of this colour-protection. I was within four yards of him, but there he stood with nothing between him and myself, nothing behind which he could hide a feather, quite motionless and fearless, watching me with one bright little black eye, confident that I could not distinguish him from the colour of the ground and the shadow of the gorse. I allowed him to enjoy his confidence and made a detour to avoid disturbing him.

Half an hour later I started on that glorious downward run of some four miles which is the sweet reward of the cyclist who climbs to the top of Hindhead. The circular descent round the brim of the Punchbowl never loses its charm. At your left hand the deep valley, at your right the rugged down rising up steeply to the granite cross with its inscription—

Post Tenebras Lux,
In Luce Spes,
In Obitu Pax,
Post Obitum Salus.

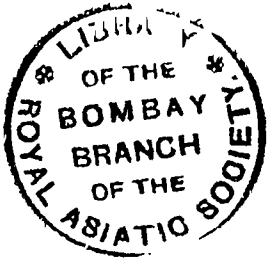
The usual knot of trippers were standing open-mouthed before the stone erected to the memory of the murdered sailor, just as Charles

Dickens pictures Smike listening with greedy interest while Nicholas Nickleby reads the inscription. At times Dickens could not resist the temptation "to lay it on thick" and make the reader's flesh creep, and this was one such occasion. "The grass on which they stood had been dyed with gore, and the blood of the murdered man had run down drop by drop into the hollow which gives the place its name." How many novelists would dare to write about "gore" in these psychological days, when the villain of the piece is only a drawing-room sneak.

Down, down, down, the cycle runs with no effort on the part of the rider, and during nearly the whole of the descent there is an ever-changing and ever-beautiful panorama passing before one's eyes. Over Mouse Hill, through Milford, on to Godalming and Guildford, and this pilgrimage comes to an end. The cyclist who rides, not with a view to covering the greatest distance in the shortest possible time, but with a view to building up a healthy mind in a healthy body, and enjoying all that Nature is so ready to give to all who love her, has after such a day on wheels as this

realised in some measure that thought of Gray's—

> The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening paradise.



VIII

GENTLE FOLK

HUMANITY—that is, English-speaking humanity—is divided into two classes: those who love the gentle folk and those who do not. Scientists, sociologists, metaphysicians, political-economists, and other unimportant persons may assert that such a classification is inadequate. Let them go their way; who would deprive any one of them of the enjoyment of believing that his particular scheme of systematisation is the one and only correct method of dividing up the forked radishes? Certainly no gentle cyclist. There is a freemasonry among the lovers of the gentle folk; you can discover one of them—there is sure not to be more than one—among the twelve in an omnibus, the ten in a third-class railway carriage, the eight in a second-class

carriage, or the six in "a first." For instance, you are in an omnibus on a winter's evening; the twelfth passenger enters, finds the vacant crevice between two of his fellow-creatures which is his due by right of his capacity and willingness to pay his penny. He eases his body down with more or less energy, according to temperament, turns to you and remarks, in true British fashion, "It's cold!" That is your opportunity for testing your eleven fellow-passengers. You reply, "Ah! sir, just the night for a clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game." Ten to one your remark will fall as flat as would a cornet solo at a Monday Pop. But, on the contrary, if one of the happy brotherhood be present, how swiftly will you recognise him in the twinkling eyes and the lips curved upward in a smile of excellent good-humour, even if he is not near enough to whisper tenderly in your ear the words, "Dear old Mrs. Battle!" There is no necessity for more words. You know the whole character of the man, and you could complacently stake your life on the hazard of his having on his bookshelves at home, side by side with the *Essays of Elia*, *The Complete Angler* of Izaak

Walton and *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* of Gilbert White. If he does not possess the *Letters of Charles Lamb*, depend upon it he passes a considerable portion of his leisure time searching booksellers' shops and catalogues for a copy of that delightful book, without which no lover of the Gentle Folk can be said to be really happy.

There is, of course, an immeasurable difference between this freemasonry and the freemasonry of angles, plummets, grips, secrets, dinners, and aprons. The latter can be achieved, I understand, by a mere introduction; it is afterwards a matter of entrance fees and subscriptions plus hocus-pocus. But who shall say what is the entrance fee to the former craft? As to introduction, I am not aware that any one has yet discovered the proper method. My own experience has been a sad one. How often have I sent forth my copy of *Elia* from the ark wherein it is thumbed with such tender care, only to find it returning without the olive-branch of even a sympathetic remark. How often have I handed it, with fair words of recommendation, to some one who appeared to possess some germs of appreciation, only to have it returned

with the words, "Not at all bad," or "Rather a decent book." One monster threw it carelessly upon the table, as if it were a mere newspaper or a blue-book, and uttered the abominable sentence, in a breezy, patronising manner, which made me loathe him, "I've managed to get through it, old fellow!" There ought to be some means of morally disinfecting a book after it has passed through such hands. Sometimes these terrible people ask you, "Why do you like Lamb?" It is an awful, a paralysing question. Who dare attempt to answer it? It is a merciful thing that the people who print those worst of all the books that are no books, albums, content themselves with inserting the question, "Who is your favourite author?" Where should we all be if they followed it up with the cold-blooded demand, "Give your reasons for selecting him." Affection does not deal with reasons. You cannot reason about a man like Charles Lamb. You can only love him.

I had been trying to analyse my feelings with regard to Lamb, and trying to recall when I first made his acquaintance, and just as I reached the almshouses in the Kingsland-road

I remembered. It was that good old dame who thought it her mission to improve the understanding of little boys. She who had given me, at the young-savage age of twelve years, a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, on which to cut my intellectual teeth. The attempt to read the first page made such an impression upon me that I was unable to take up Milton again until many years after most readers begin to appreciate him. The good soul then tried me with the *Essays of Elia*, but the only thing of interest I could find in the volume was the funny picture of the author which served as frontispiece. After several unsuccessful attempts to reproduce this portrait in the blank spaces of the title-page, I carefully hid the book away and devoutly hoped that no one would ever find it. No one can really appreciate Lamb until he is thirty, at thirty-five you begin to turn to him again and again, at forty you are his slave, with the probability of becoming a dotard concerning him at fifty.

You will remember that it was a journey in a coach along this identical Kingsland-road that led to that dissertation on "The Old and the New Schoolmaster." Somewhere in

the neighbourhood of Bishopsgate the coach had stopped to take up the staid-looking gentleman about the wrong side of thirty, who so alarmed Elia by asking him whether he had seen the show of prize cattle that morning in Smithfield, and who concluded his formidable series of interrogations at the turnpike at Kingsland "by advancing some queries relative to the North Pole Expedition." Who that has once read it can ever forget that catalogue of a schoolmaster's trials, with that vivid flash so characteristic of Lamb about the schoolmaster being "sick of perpetual boy." The piece, as he would have called it, is a fine instance of his remarkable versatility, starting as it does with a mirth-provoking account of his own ignorance on a variety of subjects and concluding with that masterpiece of tenderness and pathos, the schoolmaster's description of the relations between himself and his scholars and the sacrifices his wife had made in marrying a pedagogue, and, greater achievements than all, those subtle strokes of genius that in the three final sentences lay bare a human tragedy.

At Stoke-Newington I began to wonder

whether the tramway lines and omnibuses would ever come to an end; but, alas! they were to be my dangerous companions for many miles to come. I had determined to have a day following in the footsteps of Charles and Mary Lamb, and possibly another in hovering around the haunts of old Izaak Walton. To lovers of the picturesque I cannot strongly recommend the ride from London to Edmonton—indeed, it is misleading to write of it as "from" London, for London does not appear to come to an end at any part of the journey. You are between rows of bricks and mortar the whole of the way. Your bicycle bumps ominously at every yard, you are continually in danger of side-slip from tram-lines of a more than usually diabolical character. It wants a lot of thinking about your favourite author to make the ride enjoyable. I found the best thing to do was to try to picture the road as it was when Lamb died for the seventh time, for he declared that to change habitations was to die to them, and that when he was "evulsed" from Colebrook-row, Islington, that was his seventh death. Why did he never write an essay on the diversions of a removal? As he did not, we are left entirely

in the dark as to how the household gods, including the beloved books and "the bookcase which has followed me about like a faithful dog," were removed from Islington to Enfield. Probably the worldly belongings of the brother and sister would have been lost in a modern pantechnicon, even had such a ponderous vehicle existed in their day; most likely a very small van answered their requirements, and Charles, being a respectable retired India House official, would not allow his sister to sit on the tail-board nursing the bird-cage, however much he would have enjoyed the novel position himself. It may fairly be presumed that a special hackney-coach was hired for their personal exodus, no bicycles being available. Had wheeling been a possibility, the journey would have been rather a pleasant one.

This road was a familiar one to Lamb, for he and his sister Mary had often taken holiday at Enfield, and as he declared that Mary could walk for twelve miles, and that he himself could cover twenty, it is probable that on more than one of these trips they had walked, the dog Dash that Hood had given them running by

their side. You will remember that amusing letter to Mr. Patmore, to whom Dash was handed over, owing to flagrant disobedience. "Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it is the hydrophobia." Islington was separated from London by green fields. From Colebrook-row the brother and sister would turn rightwards and make for the main road at Kingsland, or they could have struck across footpaths to Stoke-Newington and Stamford Hill. Here there was nothing to obstruct their view of Hampstead Hill on the left and the forest of Epping on the right. Now an unbroken mass of houses extends from Stamford Hill to Hampstead on one side and to the borders of the forest on the other. At Tottenham the maps of the period show a small cluster of houses and the clump of elms known as The Seven Sisters. What has become of St. Loy's Well and The Bishop's Well, the waters of which cured a long list of diseases? Probably filled in and all outward signs of them effaced by a rare co-operative effort on the part of the suburban doctors whose descendants appear to flourish here

exceedingly. By the bye, Tottenham should possess exceptional interest for those boys and girls who have not risen superior to jam-tarts and puff-paste, for an ancient road-book, the pages now an autumnal brown, assures me that the founder of the three almshouses in this parish was one Balthazar Zanches, a Spaniard, who was confectioner to Philip II. of Spain, with whom he came over to England, and was the first to exercise the confectionery art in this then benighted country—for how could a country sans tarts and goodies be otherwise than benighted.

On one of his rambles to Enfield, Lamb must have seen the present Tottenham Cross being built, and he probably heaved many a sigh over the disappearance of the old brick cross which was such a familiar object to the Izaak Walton whom he revered, for did he not write to Wordsworth, "Izaak Walton hallows any page in which his reverend name appears." From Tottenham to Duck Lane and on to Edmonton, Charles and Mary passed between an almost continuous border of cottages on either side of the road, but every now and then they must have obtained pleasant glimpses of

the river Lea. "The Bell" at Edmonton was then the roadside inn of Cowper's *John Gilpin;* but the gentle cyclist of to-day must be prepared to find in its place a public-house of the modern type, set in a wilderness of houses the sight of which would have astonished Dame Gilpin as much as did the spectacle of her husband flying down the Enfield road.

The cause of Lamb's flight from Colebrook-row to Enfield was the difficulty he found in warding off the incursions of the many people who persisted in dropping in upon him at all hours, leaving him little time to devote to his books and his pen. In an hour when even *his* amiability seems to have been exhausted, he wrote to Bernard Barton, the Quaker banker and poet, "Whither can I take wing from the oppression of human faces? Would I were in a wilderness of apes, tossing cocoa-nuts about, grinning and grinned at." One has only to read Hazlitt's delightful description of an evening at Lamb's to understand why *Elia* was seldom left alone. "No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does." Ah! it was all very well for Hazlitt, Coleridge, Ned Phillips,

Captain Burney, Jem White, Holcroft, George Dyer, and the rest of them, but of how many delightful hours of reading have we of this generation been deprived by their incursions into the rooms in the Temple and the little house in Colebrook-row. On second thoughts, George Dyer's name must have honourable omission from the foregoing list, inasmuch as had he not visited Elia that Sunday morning, and on leaving walked along the garden path plump into the New River, we should never have had the Amicus Redivivus essay.

Down to Enfield came the family of two—the superannuated man, who had "come home for ever," and his sister Mary. They took a house at Chase Side, wherein they had often lodged when coming to Enfield on holidays. But even there he was "infested with visitors." "May we be branded for the veriest churl," he says, "if we deny our heart to the many noble-hearted friends that at times exchange their dwelling for our poor roof! It is not of guests that we complain, but of endless, purposeless visitants—droppers-in, as they are called. We sometimes wonder from what sky they fall. It is the very error of the position of our

lodging; its horoscopy was ill-calculated, being just situate in a medium—a plaguy suburban mid-space—fitted to catch idlers from town or country." If you want to catch a glimpse of the undercurrent of seriousness in Lamb, read the essay in which those sentences occur, and you will find a passage on the homes of the poor which, for truthfulness and pathos, has never been surpassed by any one who has written on the subject.

After six years at Enfield they removed to this then little village of Edmonton. I turned out of the high road into the street leading to the church and soon came to the familiar house set back from the other houses on the right-hand side of the road. In Lamb's day it was called Bay Cottage, but now the name Lamb's Cottage appears on the garden gate. A low brick wall surmounted with iron palings protects the tiny garden that is overshadowed by the side walls of the two adjoining houses. The cottage looks as if it had shyly retired from the line of frontages, had retreated down this recess between its neighbours in order to evade the attentions of those "droppers-in." It consists of three stories, what Lamb would have

called the parlour-floor, the first-floor, and a floor above with an attic window. I was delighted to find the place so well cared for. The narrow garden was ablaze with colour, the daffodils and hyacinths struggling for supremacy, and the scent of the modest clumps of wall-flowers filled the air.

It was here that Lamb spent the last two years of his life, two years, it is to be feared, of almost continuous grief and anxiety. For nearly the whole of the time, his life's companion, the sister whose love for him was only equalled by his devotion to her, was dead to him; and worse than dead, for the silence of death could not be so terrible as the awful cries that echoed through the rooms of this poor house, proclaiming aloud the sorrow that had fallen upon it. His letters to Wordsworth and

Hazlitt at this period give us some idea of the suffering he was enduring. There were however bright intervals, such as that which followed the remarkable incident of Mary's sudden recovery of peace of mind on the occasion of the little domestic ceremony of drinking to the health of the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. Moxon. How must the tender-hearted brother have rejoiced to find his sister writing, "I never felt so calm and quiet after a similar illness as I do now. I feel as if all tears were wiped from my eyes, and all care from my heart." But grief was not absent for long from Bay Cottage, and it came with overwhelming force with the news that Lamb's dearest surviving friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was no more. "When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief," he wrote. "It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world —that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve; but since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all

my cogitations." Five months later the gentle Elia had ceased to long for the old familiar faces and the old tide of life in Fleet Street, and was lying "in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried."

Only a few hundred yards from the cottage is Edmonton Church, surrounded by what was once the village churchyard. On the western side of the tower, not far from the gravel path, I found the last resting-place of the best loved and the best loving of English writers. Notwithstanding the encroachments of the great city, this is

still a quiet, peaceful corner where one can pause for a few minutes and think gratefully of the dust that lies below the tangled grass and weeds. A straggling branch of ivy is climbing over from an adjoining grave, but fortunately Charles Lamb has not been forgotten. A modest line at the foot of the headstone tells the welcome story that it was restored by "a member of the Christ's Hospital Club, Christmas, 1897," so that one can read with ease the inscription—

To the Memory

of

CHARLES LAMB

Died 27th December 1834, *aged* 59.

Farewell, dear friend, that smile, that harmless mirth
No more shall gladden our domestic hearth,
That rising tear with pain forbid to flow
Better than words no more assuage our woe,
That hand outstretched from small but well-earned store
Yield succour to the destitute no more.

Yet art thou not all lost, thro' many an age
With sterling sense and humour shall thy page
Win many an English bosom pleased to see
That old and happier vein revived in thee.
This for our earth, and if with friends we share
Our joys in heaven, we hope to meet thee there.

ALSO MARY ANN LAMB,

SISTER OF THE ABOVE,

Born 3rd December 1767, *died 20th May* 1847.

It may seem strange that one should go into the country in search of memories of such a thorough-paced Londoner as Charles Lamb; but he was not always in the mood to write: "Let no native Londoner imagine that health and rest, innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country anything better than odious and detestable." There were times when "the sweet security of streets" did not appeal to him, and when he could say, with something more than the mere thought of superannuation in his mind, "I had thought in a green old age (O green thought!) to have retired to Ponder's End, emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up

my accounts with heaven and the Company, toddling about it between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Izaak Walton morning, to Hoddesdon or Amwell, careless as a beggar." Notwithstanding his affection for the Temple, the "Salutation," and even for the ham-and-beef shop in the Strand, he always had a warm corner in his heart for the old mansions, farmhouses, and lanes of Hertfordshire, where he spent some of the happiest hours of his life. Perhaps it was kinship and love of old friends more than the love of the country that turned his thoughts again and again to Widford and Mackery End, but to the memory of those secluded haunts we owe some of the most delightful lines he ever penned.

It was useless to journey to Widford, for not a stone of the old mansion at "Blakesmoor," where his grandmother, Mrs. Field, was housekeeper, remains. Even the inscription on the stone over the good old woman's grave in Widford churchyard is no longer to be traced. We must be content with Lamb's description of the old house and the impressions it made upon him when, a tiny boy, he roamed about its silent rooms, or sat on the hot

window-seat to read Cowley, "with the grass plot before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns."

The old farmhouse at Mackery End, however, still exists, and leaving Edmonton churchyard I turned my front wheel towards Enfield, in the hope of being able to follow in the footsteps of Elia and his cousin Bridget on that famous excursion they made together "to beat up the quarters" of some of their "less known relations in that fine corn country." Like Lamb himself, I had been talking about Mackery End all my life—that is, ever since I began to really live, ever since I made the acquaintance of Bridget through that tender and loving description by her cousin. But I think it was that final passage that set me longing years ago to see with my own eyes the place that was so dear to the heart of Elia: "How Bridget's memory, exalted by the occasion, warmed into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment, and her own, and to the astoundment of B. F., who sat by, almost the

only thing that was not a cousin there,—old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowding back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a friendly warmth,—when I forget all this, then may my country-cousins forget me, and Bridget no more remember that in the days of weakling infancy I was her tender charge—as I have been her care in foolish manhood since—in those pretty pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire."

Leaving Winchmore Hill to the left, I pedalled over bumpy roads that had once formed part of the old Enfield Park and Chace, now struggling in vain to show some signs of their former rural character. This bubbling over of the seething pot of London brings about some strange effects. You ride between barriers of ugly villas, each one the exact counterpart of its fellow, each tiny front garden "laid out" to the same pattern, similar shrubs and flowers in each, all of the "four pots a shilling" variety. Suddenly you come upon a piece of unsold land containing a gnarled old tree, a relic of what was once a veritable

forest. When Evelyn came here "to see a garden at Enfield towne," he found the Chace "a very pretty place"; but that which he most wondered at was, that in the compass of twenty-five miles, yet within fourteen of London, there was not a house, barn, church, or building, excepting three lodges. At Mr. Secretary Coventry's lodge he found "three greate ponds and some few inclosures, the rest a solitarie desert, yet stor'd with not lesse than 3000 deere. There are pretty retreats for gentlemen, especially for those who are studious and lovers of privacy." There are still a few pretty retreats left for studious gentlemen, but the poor old Enfield windmill, bereft of its sails, looked down sadly upon me from among the new houses that are edging it in, and the old inn called after the mill has given place to a public-house with a saloon bar which probably contains a fashionably-dressed barmaid instead of the ancient "mine host."

From Enfield to Barnet is a hilly road, with the compensation that the bricks and mortar are left behind. There are fine old elms with their topmost branches blackened with the nests of rooks, and from the tops of

the hills stretches of open country are to be seen. In four days a miraculous change had come about. March and the first three weeks of April had been cold, wet, and sunless; but now in the last week of April we had had four days of blazing sunshine that would not have disgraced the month of August. Four days ago not a bud was to be seen on the bare black branches, and we were shivering in our greatcoats. On this particular morning the light greenery of spring was on every stem and twig, the fruit trees were in full bloom, the flowering currants were a mass of welcome colour, and a white patch here and there in the hedgerows proclaimed that the hawthorn buds were busily preparing for their annual festival. In the neighbourhood of Barnet the young lambs were having a great time of it, skipping about in the warm sunshine instead of shivering against their mothers' woolly coats. For three mornings in succession the Clerk of the Weather had been forecasting thunderstorms with all his might, but they had fortunately not turned up, although this morning thunder had been murmuring faintly in the distance, notwithstanding the fact that not a

cloud was to be seen in the unbroken blue sky. I was thankful to rest for a time in the shade of the Hadley Woods within sight of Old Barnet Church, with the black iron beacon-lamp on its square ivy-covered tower. At Barnet town the temptation for a deep draught of soda-and-milk was irresistible; I had not suffered so much from thirst since my first day's cycling, and the sun which we had been longing to see through so many weary weeks was mercilessly scorching my neck and giving me all the advantages of a Turkish bath.

Outside the town of Barnet, on the way to St. Albans, you are on a wide white road with a perfect surface, really metallic, and all you have to do is to sit comfortably on your saddle and enjoy a downward spin of three miles to South Mimms. The country is not particularly interesting, but the road is a glorious recompense. Beyond the village there is a stiff piece of "collar work"; but when the summit is reached you have a very fine view of the town of St. Albans, which from this point has a certain air of grandeur which it loses later on the road. The old abbey seems to brood over the red-roofed town and to be

gathering it beneath its sheltering wings. Three miles from South Mimms you run into the old-fashioned village of London Colney, nestling on the banks of the little river Colne. Cycling has given the village a new lease of life, and the old inn has put on a new coat of paint to attract the thousands of London wheelmen who will pass along this famous north road during the coming summer. Just beyond the village I came across a roadside inn whose signboard bore the astonishing announcement, "Dinners, dancing, music"! O rare and excellent Boniface, not content, as are so many of your race, to limit hospitality to the dispensing of tankards of beer and shandy-gaff, but to invite the jaded London lads and lasses who wheel to your doors to "foot it o'er the grass" to the strains of your—well, it may be a very discordant piano, sorely tried by much work in the open air; but nothing can detract from the delightful suggestion, "dinners, dancing, music" in the garden of a roadside inn. This sort of pleasantry is manufactured in abundance in Germany and Holland, why not in England? O for a new band of preaching friars who should scour the highways and by-

ways teaching the English people how to amuse themselves with intelligence and decency and without forfeiting their self-respect!

I have often had to remonstrate with thoughtless cyclists for taking their dogs with them on a long run; but on this day, as I mounted the hill of St. Albans town, I saw such a sight as I trust will never sadden my eyes again. A poor fox-terrier was panting after a motor-car that was rattling at a terrific pace down the hill. The poor beast's eyes were nearly starting from their sockets, his tongue was dripping with perspiration, he had evidently been nearly breaking his heart for many weary miles, and just as he passed me he seemed to lose his senses, for he stumbled and rolled upon his side. With great difficulty the brave old fellow recovered his feet, but he had injured a leg, and went ambling along after his cruel owner as fast as he could run, with only three legs to do the work of four.

At St. Albans I found the welcome luxury of a large pailful of cool soft rain water, and never did I more enjoy what the west-country folk call "a swill." After a moderate lunch, a stroll through the town and the abbey, and a

refreshing cup of tea, I pedalled out of the High Street, down the road leading to St. Peter's Church, and soon found myself on the pleasant Hertfordshire road leading through Saundridge to Wheathampstead. The scenery is of that peculiarly quiet and peaceful type characteristic of the county. There is nothing to make violent appeals to the imagination, nothing to unduly stir the pulses, but everything to produce a mood of quiet meditation and reflection. When, however, you see the sign of "The Red Cow" in the distance it is well not to be lost in meditation, for the hill beyond is a decidedly awkward descent, and you might find yourself all too suddenly at the bottom calculating the cost of a new machine, and reflecting upon the uneven character of the earth's crust. It is better to dismount at the brow of the hill and pause for a few minutes to look down upon the village of Wheathampstead below, nestling prettily among the trees. By the bye, do not suffer the humiliation I passed through by calling the place "Wheathampstead." The natives appear to resent it strongly, and ask you somewhat tartly if you mean "Wet'emsted." Notwithstanding the

introduction of a railway station the village is, I should imagine, in almost exactly the same condition as when Elia and Bridget last visited it.

Wheathampstead is easy enough to find, but when you are there you have yet to discover Mackery End. The only direction you can obtain from Elia is that it is "a farmhouse, delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead." Walking down the hill from "The Red Cow" I had inquired of three persons without success, but from a fourth I obtained a clue. This worthy believed it was not far from "The Cherry Trees," but his directions as to the site of that hostelry were so confusing that I had to make further inquiries. The clue was, however, a splendid one, for all the population seemed to know "The Cherry Trees," and every one at "The Cherry Trees" knew Mackery End. Let the pilgrim go straight through the village to the railway station, then turn sharply to the left, by the sign-post. A ride of a mile along a pretty lane will bring him to "The Cherry Trees." There turn to the right on to a road running across what is known locally as "the

heath," and the first lane on the right will lead you direct to the object of your journey.

"We arrived at the spot of our anxious curiosity about noon," wrote Elia. "The sight of the old farmhouse, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollection, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though I had forgotten it, *we* had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself, and I thought I knew the aspect of a place which, when present, O how unlike it was to that which I had conjured up so many times instead of it! Still the air breathed balmily about it; the season was in the 'heart of June,' and I could say with the poet—

"But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation!

"Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again—some altered features, of course, a little

grudged at. At first, indeed, she was ready to disbelieve for joy; but the scene soon reconfirmed itself in her affections, and she traversed every outpost of the old mansion: to the

wood-house, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood (house and birds were alike flown), with a breathless impatience of recognition which was more pardonable perhaps than decorous at the age of fifty odd. But Bridget in some things is behind her years."

My own first glimpse of Mackery End was not of the old farmhouse, but of the turret of the ancient Jacobean mansion on the opposite side of the road. Then, as I ascended the lane, the whole of the mansion came into view, and turning rightward I found myself face to face with Lamb's farmhouse, a two-storied brick-built house, with two or three white steps leading up to a neat porch, the front of the house nearly covered with ivy. In the pleasant meadow, half lawn, half orchard, hundreds of bright yellow daffodils were striving to hold up their heads above the long grass, and in the farmyard adjoining a large family of cocks and hens were picking up their evening meal among the half-demolished hayricks. At the back of the house are some fine old out-buildings, among which Elia and Bridget and brother John must have played many a game as children. I sat upon the gate opening into the meadow and watched the sun casting the black shadow of the old mansion over the green grass. Was it that old house, so familiar to Lamb in his childhood, that had implanted in his heart that love of old things which was always a joy to him. What memories must

have been awakened in Lamb's mind when he revisited this place and looked across those gently undulating meadows and fields, interspersed with clumps of timber, and in the distance the modest Hertfordshire hills forming the sky-line. Was it among these tree-fringed lanes that Lamb, when a boy, fell in love with that fair-haired Alice who, it is clear, haunted his dreams by night and day all through his life. She appears in his poems and essays as Anna, and in just such a winding wood-walk as these about Mackery End he may have written those lines that tell of the one romance of his life—

When last I roved these winding wood-walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet,
Oft-times would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade;
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me self-wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with the fair-haired maid.
I passed the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain;
It spake of days which ne'er must come again,
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved.

"Now fair befall thee, gentle maid!" said I,
And from the cottage turned me with a sigh.

But Lamb's life was not to be one of married happiness, but a life of self-sacrifice and brotherly devotion, the depths of which the world has not even yet learned to fully appreciate. For those who will unravel the story, obscured as it is by the delicate humour, the graceful fancy and the indescribable charm of *Elia*, there is nothing more truly noble and pathetic in the records of human love.

I lingered long about the old place, reading bits of *Elia*, until the setting sun and the cool evening breeze reminded me that I must make for Hatfield. Back to Wheathampstead I rode and was soon upon the chain of by-roads leading across country to the great North Road. It was a pleasant six miles with a good surface every inch of the way, and pheasants gliding about the roads and buzzing over the hedges, as common as domestic fowls are in most country lanes.

Reaching Hatfield at dusk, I did not go, like Mr. Samuel Pepys, "to the inn next my Lord Salisbury's house," but to an excellent

hostel where the good landlady herself cooked to perfection the beefsteak with its garnishing of crisp potatoes which was brave fare for the pilgrim on wheels. After hunger was completely satisfied I sauntered out to see how Hatfield passed its evenings, and found the usual melancholy state of things: nothing but dirty ill-ventilated public-house bars for the people, the regulation knots of lads and young men loafing and guffawing at the gloomy street-corners; as far as I could discover, no attempt to provide the people with intelligent means of amusement and education. Perhaps you have often wondered, as I have, at the crowd of villagers that always haunts country railway stations in the evenings and all day on Sundays. I wonder no longer. On this dark spring evening, with no books to fall back upon, I found myself gravitating towards the railway station. I was astounded to find how attractive it was compared with the village streets. The brightness of the signal-lamps, the feeling that at the other end of these steel rails was the great city with all its wondrous life and excitement—one forgot for the moment its horrors and its appalling problems. I found

myself keenly interested in the making-up of goods trains and the rattling hither and thither of locomotives, and when, at last, a train-load of passengers steamed in, disgorging its cargo on to the platform amid a scene of bustle and excitement, I was as keenly elated as the village lads. It was a queer experience, and one that filled me with forebodings.

I returned to mine inn, but the only entertainment it presented was a dozen old halfpenny newspapers, an A B C Time-table, and a truly remarkable volume, *The Royal Dream Book*, by An Old Dreamer. It was a 32mo bound respectably in black cloth, with an engraved frontispiece representing a young lady in evening dress reclining asleep upon a couch; above her head was a cloud enclosing the vision of a young gentleman with Dundreary whiskers in the act of placing his arm around the waist of a rather coy young lady. The work was arranged alphabetically, and opening the leaves at random I fell upon the somewhat prosaic heading "Beans." The author's experience must have been wide and peculiar. It never occurred to me that any one could possibly dream of beans, but evidently they do, for the

author declares that "Under any circumstances to dream of beans is unfortunate. If you dream of eating them it foretells sickness. If you dream of seeing them growing it foretells a quarrel with those you love best." Surely this experience of An Old Dreamer must have been the origin of the phrase, "Give him beans." After half a dozen pages of this remarkable work I felt almost afraid to retire to rest. To think about bed itself was a serious matter, for I discovered, to my horror, that if I happened to dream about bed I should be married hastily, *probably before the end of next month.* To one already married such a dream was to be avoided by every possible means. Fortunately the heat of the day had tired me out, and I did not dream of either beans or beds.

The next morning the sun was again shining in a cloudless sky. The breakfast table was freely sprinkled with freshly cut primroses, and the clockmaker on the opposite side of the way paused in the task of taking down his shutters to exclaim to the passing milkman, "Ain't it grand!" Too bright for angling, but just the right weather for a run to Amwell and the Lea in company with old

Izaak Walton. "Among all your quaint readings," wrote Lamb to Coleridge, "did you ever light upon Walton's *Complete Angler?* I asked you the question once before; it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart; there are many choice old verses interspersed in it; it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it; it would Christianise every discordant angry passion." Were the characteristics of a book ever more truthfully and felicitously described? If anglers obtain half the pleasure from angling that non-anglers obtain from reading gentle Izaak's book, then they are fortunate indeed. I had often thought that I would like to read some of the chapters on the very ground that Walton so dearly loved, so I had placed a little sixpenny edition in one of the pockets of my jacket.

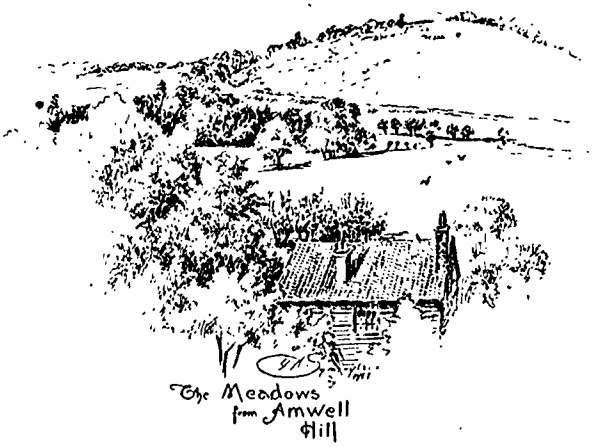
To read *The Complete Angler* is to form a deep affection for its author. His simplicity, his love of peaceful country sights and sounds and his fine morality win over all who can read his pages. Almost all our knowledge of him is confined to his own writings. His childhood and youth are a blank to us, and beyond the fact of his baptism nothing is known of him

until his twentieth year, when he was a hosier in London. At first he had a shop at the Royal Exchange, but afterwards he lived on the north side of Fleet Street, two doors west of Chancery Lane. Though a tradesman, he was no money-grubber. Is there not a fine contempt for money-worshippers in that clear-cut sentence of his: "Be sure that your riches be justly got, or you spoil all." If he had entirely devoted himself to the building up of a fortune we should have had no *Complete Angler*, no gospel of peace and quietness. He loved to leave his shop and go on a fishing excursion as often as possible; and he loved letters, for he was on friendly terms with Ben Jonson and Drayton and Dr. Donne. He did not write this evergreen book until he was an old man, and that is perhaps one reason for its peculiar contemplative charm. There is a fragrance of wise old age in its every page, and at the same time it breathes with all the vigour and energy of youth.

I was thinking of good old Izaak as I pedalled along the side of my lord of Hatfield's fine estate, and was a good two miles along the Hertford road when my meditations were

rudely interrupted by a loud report almost under my nose, followed by an ominous fizzing sound and the truly awful bumping that proclaims a deflated tyre. I had been doubtful about that excrescence on my front tyre for some time past, and now had come one of the most disastrous "bursts" it has ever been my fate to see. The tyre was slit up for about six inches, and there was a hole in the inner tube that a sixpence would not cover. My puncture outfit was no good in such a case, but I was determined not to go back to Hatfield. On I tramped in the hope of getting a lift to Hertford. For four weary miles under a blazing sun and, worse than all, along one of the best of riding roads, I pushed that machine, before a friendly brewer took me up in his cart and deposited me at the door of a cycle repairer, just on the threshold of the town of Hertford. Fortunately a new tyre was here obtainable, and in half an hour's time I was riding through the fine old county town as happy as the proverbial sandboy. Past the drunken-looking effigies of the two children on the posterns of the Blue-coat school I bounced down the well-kept road leading to Ware, revelling in my newly-

purchased resiliency. There being nothing to detain me in Ware, except to inquire the way to Amwell, I soon found myself climbing up



that hill which Venator was so anxious to reach before sunrise in order to meet "a pack of otter-dogs of noble Mr. Sadler's."

Another name beside Izaak Walton's is associated with Amwell, that of John Scott the

Quaker poet, who was on friendly terms with Dr. Johnson, is alluded to by Sir Walter in *Redgauntlet*, and who wrote a poem descriptive of the beauties of Amwell, which won him the title of Scott of Amwell, although he was born in Grange Walk, Bermondsey, and died at Ratcliff. I do not know what Johnson thought of the poem of Amwell, but the only portion of it that I have read contains so much of the catalogue style of poetry that I have never yearned for more.

How picturesque
The slender group of airy elm, the clump
Of pollard oak, or ash, with ivy brown
Entwin'd ; the walnut's gloomy breadth of boughs,
The orchard's ancient fence of rugged pales,
The haystack's dusky cone, the moss-grown shed,
The clay-built barn ; the elder-shaded cot,
Whose white-washed gable prominent thro' green
Of waving branches shows, perchance inscribed
With some past owner's name, or rudely graced
With rustic dial, that scarcely serves to mark
Time's ceaseless flight ; the wall with mantling vines
O'erspread, the porch with climbing woodbine wreath'd,

And under shelt'ring eaves the sunny bench
Where brown hives range, whose busy tenants fill,
With drowsy hum, the little garden gay,
Whence blooming beans, and spicy herbs, and flowers,
Exhale around a rich perfume!

This is all very well, but you get tired of it in time; and having seen Amwell I think it deserves better poetry.

It is worth climbing the hill to loiter for an hour in the quiet little churchyard which seems in danger of slipping down into the New River below. I wonder whether the new inn opposite to the churchyard gate occupies the site of the "honest ale-house" where Huntsman invited Piscator and Venator to have a cup of good barley-wine, and sing "Old Rose," and "all rejoice together." From a stile above the graves you can look down upon the meadows where the otter hunt took place, and you can imagine the excited Venator's voice ringing in your ears: "Now, now Ringwood has him! now he's gone again, and has bit the poor dog. Now Sweetlips has her: hold her, Sweetlips! now all the dogs have her, some above and some under water; but now, now

she's tired, and past losing: come, bring her to me, Sweetlips. Look, 'tis a bitch-otter, and she has lately whelped: let's go to the place where she was put down, and not far from it you will find all her young ones, I dare warrant you, and kill them all too."

The river at the foot of the hill is the New River, the Lea is on the other side of the meadows, its course marked by the willows. Ware can be seen lying in the plain at the left. In the cottage gardens abutting on the churchyard the fruit trees are this morning full of blossom, and the bees are busily pouring in and out of the hives. On the other side of the Lea a timber-crowned hill gives a finish to a pretty landscape such as John Linnell would have loved to paint. As I sat down in the little church to escape the fierce sun, I thought of that discourse on morality and religion delivered by old Izaak after the otter-hunt, with the half-apologetic sentences following: "But of this no more; for though I love civility, yet I hate severe censures. I'll to mine own art; and I doubt not but at yonder tree I shall catch a chub." It must have been a delightful change for the Fleet Street hosier to

leave the cares of business behind and journey, rod in hand, for days together along the banks of the Lea as those banks were then. Manners, as well as the face of the country, have changed since then, and if there are any hosiers in Fleet Street with a taste for literature they are not likely to be found at humble roadside inns eating dinners of fish that they have caught themselves, or coaxing milkmaids to sing love songs. Was Izaak Walton an exceptional man in his love for beautiful ballads, or was it a common thing in his time for every one to seize every possible opportunity for singing?

From Amwell I rode along a dull uninteresting road to Hoddesdon, but could not succeed in discovering "The Thatched House" where Venator proposed to drink his morning draught. There are many picturesque corners still remaining in Hoddesdon, but as I could not have my "Thatched House," I rode on sulkily to Broxbourne. The New River and the old Lea are so inextricably mixed up in these parts that it is sometimes difficult to tell from a distance which you are looking at. At Broxbourne, however, I found the Lea winding through some cool meadows where Piscator

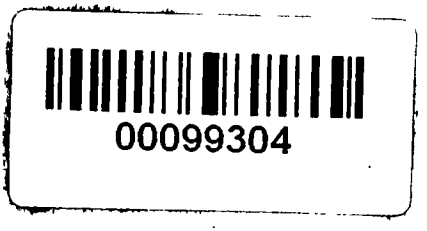
might well have given his disciples some of those delightful discourses on the fixing of baits, the habits of chub, roach, and trout, and the wonders of the watery deeps, or have recited his favourite poem of Sir Harry Wotton's—

Welcome, pure thoughts! welcome, ye silent groves!
These guests, these courts, my soul most dearly loves!
Now the wing'd people of the sky shall sing
My cheerful anthems to the gladsome spring:
A prayer-book, now, shall be my looking-glass,
In which I will adore sweet Virtue's face.
Here dwell no hateful looks, no palace cares,
No broken vows dwell here, nor pale-faced fears;
Then here I'll sit, and sigh my hot love's folly,
And learn t' affect a holy melancholy:
And if contentment be a stranger—then
I'll ne'er look for it, but in heaven, again.

From Broxbourne I pedalled through market gardens to Cheshunt, after which, instead of keeping on the main road, I turned off through the gateway of Theobald's Park, where Auceps the falconer had to leave the conference with the angler and the hunter in order to visit the house of a friend who was

mewing a hawk for him. Riding through the fine avenue of elms, I presently came upon a sight that would have had a somewhat disturbing effect on citizen Izaak Walton. Here in Theobald's Park, miles from Fleet Street, is old Temple Bar, set up with all its stones each in their proper places, but looking much cleaner and altogether smarter than when it stood by the old Cock Tavern. The road through this pretty park is an exceedingly pleasant route for reaching Enfield and North London, much to be preferred to the road through Enfield Highway to Tottenham Cross, which is a very different place to-day from the rustic village that gladdened good Izaak's eyes each time he came upon an angling expedition. Instead of leaving the good old man as Venator did, at Tottenham Cross, I bade him farewell beneath the shadow of the Temple Bar, but with Venator's words upon my lips, "I thank you for your many instructions, which (God willing) I will not forget."

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*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